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This dreamer

THIS DREAMER

By James I. Vance, D.D.

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Love Trails of the Long Ago

"Forbid Him Not"

God's Open

Being a Preacher

In the Breaking of the Bread

Tendency

The Eternal in Man

The Rise of a Soul

The Young Man Four-Square

Life's Terminals

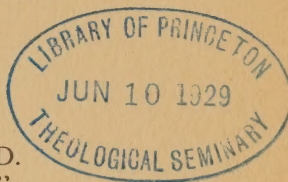
This Dreamer

ADDRESSES ON ACHIEVING FAITH

By

JAMES I. VANCE, D. D., LL. D.

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"God's Open," "Being a Preacher," etc.*



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*To All Who Help to Make
the Dream Come True*

PREFACE

HAS the world grown too sophisticated to furnish any longer a market for ideals? Has man become too scientific to be beguiled with dreams? Are realities the only things worth while? Is the dreamer piping his stuff to an empty house? Have respect for tradition, and reverence for truth, and love for the courtesies and serenities of home gone clean out of fashion? Are patriotism and chivalry and the daring of danger and the challenge of adventure and the spell of the romantic merely "apple sauce"? Has man ceased to steer by a star?

We are being told he has. It is quite the fashion to greet the dreamer with the cynic's stare, and speak of the idealist as a simple fool. It is a crime to be mushy; and to yield to sentiment is worse than to be immoral. Indeed, we are told there is no such thing as morality. Take life as it is. Get what you want. Be yourself. The only thing that matters is reality.

And so stars are at a discount, and dreams are in the discard. Poets are wasting their breath, especially the old-fashioned fellows like Browning and Tennyson, whose genius the Babbitts brand as fourth-class.

But there are signs of a revolt against this bait-

ing of idealism. After all, we find it is a drab world in which no dreaming survives. Life becomes intolerably dull without a song. We are bored to death with pot-hooks and glass tubes and formulas. Life is more than meat and the body than raiment. When dreams die and visions fade the people perish.

Even the *American Mercury* with all its brilliant cynicism of life's intangible values seems to have moods when it feels incurably homesick for the things that call to us out of the wonderland of dreams.

The other day it put Vachel Lindsay on its front page with these lines:

“Babbitt, your tribe is passing away,
This is the end of your infamous day.
The Virginians are coming again.”

The Virginians! What a word is there! What a picture is painted of the gentle, courteous, cultured, chivalrous life, when we think of the Virginians! And Lindsay says, on *Mercury's* front page, “The Virginians are coming again.” God grant it!

We have had enough of the roughneck in literature, of Sodom in society, of sex in drama, and of nakedness in art.

“Babbitt, your tribe is passing away,
This is the end of your infamous day.
The Virginians are coming again.

Put in rhetoric, whisper and hint,
 Put in shadow, murmur and glint,
 Jingle and jangle this song like a spur,
 Sweep over each tottering bridge with a whirr,
 Clearer and faster up Main street and pike,
 'Til sparks flare up with the flints that strike.
 Leap metrical ditches with bridle let loose.
 This song is a war, with iron-shod use.
 Let no musician with blotter and pad
 Set down his pot-hooks to make the song sad.
 Find
 Your own rhymes
 When Robert E. Lee
 Gallops once more to the plain from the sea.

In the star-proud natural fury of men
 The Virginians are coming again! "

It is high time for the "star-proud natural fury of men" to assert itself. We need a revival of idealism in religion, in morals, in citizenship, in social and business relations. "Behold, this dreamer cometh!" Let him come! Let the Virginians come again!

All greatness will be behind us when the race has lost the knack of generating a "star-proud fury." What is needed to-day to cleanse the stables and drive out indecencies and shame dishonesty and corruption and intimidate the beast is a revival of star-proud fury.

No, the dreamer has not lost his market value. Over in Germany a woman named Hedwig Courths-

Mahler is one of the most popular novelists of the day. She writes books by the dozens, and millions buy them. Since the World War she has written and sold enough to make her rich. What kind of books does she write? She tells us. "They are fairy tales, if you please. They do not relate what happens in the every-day world, but what everybody dreams of and hopes may happen to him some time."

There is something greater than reality. It is idealism. We build our altars where the light falls. We go down on our knees before the unseen.

"Said Life to Art, 'I love thee best,
Not when I find in thee,
My very face and form expressed
With dull fidelity.

"'But when in thee, my longing eyes
Behold continually,
The mystery of my memories
And all I long to be.'"

And so, by your permission, "*This Dreamer*" cometh.

J. I. V.

Nashville, Tennessee.

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I

THIS DREAMER

"Behold, this dreamer cometh."—GENESIS 37: 19.

THEY mean, the fool has arrived. They were announcing their verdict that the man was non compos mentis. They were branding him. They were turning up their noses at Joseph. They were consigning their brother to the limbo of simple souls. "*Behold, this dreamer cometh!*"

They had seen quite enough of this gay-coated youngster who walked with his head in the air and dreamed of his brothers beneath his heels. They are sick and tired of his high and mighty ways. They are angered that their weak-minded old father should allow this conceited favourite to turn his head. They despise Joseph. They hate him. They do not understand him. He baffles them. He makes them feel uncomfortable. He makes them feel small. They are sore. They would like to kill him, and be rid of him forever. And so they get ready for the execution. "*Behold, this dreamer cometh.*"

IDEALISM DISCREDITED

It is a mood with which our day is quite familiar. We are living in an age contemptuous of idealism.

We want people whose feet are on the ground rather than people whose heads are in the air. We are disposed to classify the dreamer as a fool, as hazy and impractical. We want people who concern themselves with realities. Our high and mighty era of scientific sophistication labels idealism "apple sauce." It brands the dreamer as mushy, moon-struck, mistaken, sentimental.

Neither physical science nor behaviouristic philosophy nor new psychology is disposed to pay much attention to the bletherings of the dreamer. The center of the stage is held to-day by people who assume they cannot lose their way since they have discarded faith for facts and the fog bank for certitude. Such people find it easy to become arrogant and affect omniscience. Hence it is quite the fashion with them to heap ridicule on simple souls who keep on dreaming dreams and seeing visions.

Ours is an age of cynicism, and you can hear the cackle of the cult in every classroom. A recent writer describes a visit made by a group of university men to a certain high school to determine whether or not the school should go on the accredited list. Even these men were surprised at what they found.

In the department of history they found the entire hour devoted to a discussion of the seamy side of two of our national heroes. When the hour was up there was no halo left. The pupils seemed highly gratified that their up-to-date teacher had

succeeded in knocking the old fellows from their pedestals.

In the department of psychology Freud's rotten views on sex relations and self-expression were being enthusiastically championed. The boys and girls were told that they must not suppress a natural urge lest they bring on nervous prostration or invite some mental disorder. They were being taught that morality is a matter of opinion. The children seemed very happy to find that the old fogies who had been talking about morality were all wrong, and that the wise thing to do with the lusts of the flesh is to unclamp.

At the assembly hour an invited speaker took for his subject: Why We Behave Like Human Beings, and exploited the theory that man is nine-tenths animal, and that not much is to be expected of him, anyhow. From start to finish the committee heard not a syllable about anything idealistic. When one of the visitors ventured a suggestion that man has traveled some distance from his animal progenitors and is really acquiring some spiritual impulses, he was rebuked with the remark that such views were mushy.

All this is supposed to represent progress, to be the latest mood of the thoroughly up-to-date. It is regarded as strictly modern. In reality, it is mouldy and time-worn. It ranted around Dothan three thousand years ago, and incited the clammy sons of Jacob to seek to slay a blood brother the

sum of whose offending was that he was an idealist, and had dreamed a dream.

ARE THE CYNICS RIGHT?

Is idealism merely "apple sauce"? Is the apostle of the spiritual mushy? Has the world reached an age where it can dispense with dreamers? Is there no longer any market for a soul that can see the unseen and hear the inaudible? Is man merely an animal, and must he always remain one?

I was riding down a mountain road and past a green strip of meadow enclosed in a rail fence. Inside, a cow was grazing. A rope was tied at one end to her horn and at the other to her hoof. One might have thought that the lush grass of the meadow might have kept her to the pasture without being hobbled. But even a cow dreams of a bigger world. Surely man is not less. And those who would have us go through life with our brains tied to our heels, with souls hobbled to the flesh, are strangely oblivious of the best.

The world still needs dreamers. Those who would lead the way and "be the fair beginning of a time" must have vision. Only faith can sense the movings in the tops of the tall trees. Only spirit can feel the pulses of the infinite. Only an idealist can glimpse the light that never was on land or sea.

It is the dreamer that stirs the world, that gives colour to life, who summons to the heroic and

prophesies a better day. It was an idealist who said: "Tyranny must be destroyed." It was another idealist who said: "Liberty or death!" It was still another who said: "Here I stand. I can do naught else. God help me!" It was a great dreamer who said: "The world must be made safe for democracy." Your prosaic, humdrum realists never strike fire. A clod is never anything but a clod to them. They are powerless to stir life beneath the ribs of death. The great poets and painters and philosophers and singers and preachers and prophets and statesmen and nation-builders and age-producers and dawn-bringers have been dreamers.

Call the roll. You can start with Moses or Julius Cæsar, and end with Mussolini or Lindbergh. It is the same story. Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George, Theodore Roosevelt, Gladstone, Savonarola, Steinmetz, Edison, Henry Ford, John Burroughs,—it is the roll-call of the dreamers.

Even when we enter what is usually regarded as the hard and sordid and practical realm of commercial and industrial activity, the same fact obtains. Successful and constructive genius in business must be hard-headed, and keep its feet on the ground. But it must be more. It must be high-minded, and keep its head in the air. There must be a dreamer. The men who head the big corporations have vision. John Wanamaker and Judge Gary were as much idealists as Allan Seeger

and John McCrae and Edgar Guest and Rupert Brooke. It was not Esau the realist but Jacob the dreamer who returned a millionaire. It was not the cynical brothers but Joseph the dreamer who reached the throne of Egypt. One of the keenest and most capable and constructive men of my acquaintance seems to devote his life to making money, and in this pursuit has been most successful. But those who know him best know him as an idealist. His money-bags are merely an incident.

It is the dreamer who pioneers the world to a bigger and better life. Spengler declares that the evils of the modern world have come upon us because we have descended from the perspective of the birds to that of the frogs. There may be those who prefer the frog level, but humans would best look higher. Commander Byrd in describing his method of selecting the men who accompany him on his perilous flights declares that he seeks for those who combine the spirit of the dreamer with the quality of the fighter. Both of course are needed. But God save civilization from the hands of the brute who can fight but does not dream!

One day I went through the plant of the United States Steel Company at Homestead, that city soaking and smoking in the grime of toil underneath the big hills on which the multimillionaires of Pittsburgh have their palatial homes. I began with the big troughs of pig iron and scrap metal dumped into the roaring furnaces, and followed the

process to the point where finished product came out in the shape of rails and structural steel and armour plate. The work to-day is comparatively easy, for the plant has been electrified, and the men are largely engaged in touching buttons and throwing switches and pulling levers. I saw a man toss about an ingot of steel weighing sixty thousand pounds as easily as an old-fashioned blacksmith would handle a horseshoe. All that the man did was to sit on a bridge and throw a switch. But the switch was harnessed to an eight-thousand horse-power motor. It took a dreamer to build the motor.

A few weeks later I went through a great textile mill at Lexington, North Carolina. It was equipped with the last word in mill machinery. It was kept going night and day, working to capacity production. To-day it employs eighteen hundred hands as against five thousand a few years ago. Machinery has made the difference. I watched the process beginning where the raw cotton is pumped through a big pipe from the warehouse into the machine, and on to the room where the finished product, measured, bolted, and baled, is ready for the market. I left the mill unsoiled, ready to enter the pulpit. The young women who ran the looms were neat and tidy, and lived with their vanity cases in easy reach. About all a girl seemed to do was to watch a half dozen looms and tie a knot when a thread broke on some one of the

hundred spinning spools. Whenever a thread broke, the looms politely stopped of their own accord, and deferentially waited until the young lady had tied the knot, and then proceeded with their work. But it took a dreamer to invent the machines.

Some of us have stood at Muscle Shoals where the mighty tide of the Tennessee River has been harnessed, until even the water that splashes over the spillway is made to release its white power and pay it out to the industries of the land. But the engineer who dreamed Muscle Shoals was an idealist. There can be no proxy for personality, and no machine can ever take the place of a man. "Behold, this dreamer cometh!" Well that he does come. It will be the end when he has gone to come no more. Then progress will cease. All music will be silent, and every picture turned to dust.

SOMETHING BETTER THAN LIFE

It is a cheap world that has nothing left worth dying for, that rates physical life as its biggest value. It is an animal world that has canned all its dreams, and that thinks only of sating its lusts, of saving its own hide. It is a bankrupt world that would guard itself against impulses to heroism and sacrifice. And it is a world worse than bankrupt that ridicules faith and makes a movie of agonies that sweat blood.

Science is great. Its contributions to life are immense. It can analyze the make-up of our bodies, and marshal the material forces which operate about us. Let us not suspect science, nor imagine there is anything to fear. Open wide the door, turn on all the light, shout the news from the housetops. God does not have to be talked about in whispers, and His world has not a terror that needs to be caged.

But science has its limitations. Life can never be packed into a scientific formula. Facts can never take the place of faith. Faith is creative. It is dynamic. It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And so we can never surrender our ideals, and must never quit dreaming.

We still need to tarry in His Presence Whose first command is not "Know," but "Believe," "all things are possible to him that believeth," and Whose power releases to the magic impulse of every soul that can say: "Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief! "

"Behold, this dreamer cometh! " Let him come. Hats off! He has seen a star, and is on the way. Who knows but his dream may lead us to the cradle of some new Messiah?

II

DREAM OR DUST?

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."

—GENESIS 28: 12.

WHAT a night! What a morning! What a dream!

Some men have dreams and some have dust, but the men who build the world are the dreamers; and those whom the world does not forget, to whom it builds memorials, and whose names it sends ringing down the grooves of time, are those whose daring souls mount on the radiant wings of a dream to some fair height from whose summit you can see heaven. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."

GREAT TO DREAM

And so it is great to dream. It is great to be a dreamer. It is great to have a dream, to look in on the unseen, to watch the angels as they come down and climb up the ladder that reaches to heaven. It is great to look past dull reality, to hear the voices which call to you out of the eternal,

and to feel that strange stirring of the infinite within which bids you aspire.

It is great to dream. To be sure, it is sometimes foolish. Dreams have turned silly heads, and upset shallow hearts, and stampeded the pattering feet of fools. It is not safe for some people to take their eyes off the ground. They lose the way. But it is great when you can dream and keep your head, when you can talk with the gods and not neglect the daily task, when you can capitalize eternity without going bankrupt in time.

Think of what the dreamers of the world have done. They have been the bards of a constructive discontent. They have caught the vision of a better day, of a finer order, of a cleaner and a kinder world, and they have talked it and sung it and painted it and preached it until the crowd has said: "Let us go and see this strange thing which is come to pass!"

Dreamers are the creators of the world. They stand back in the dim shadows of chaos, saying: "Let be!" until something has issued out of nothing but a dream. They are the prophets who tarry on the rim of night, crying: "The morning cometh!" They are the reformers who can hear the groans and death-cries of wrong before the executioner arrives. They are the knights-errant of every chivalry that has ever been worth a lance. They are the angels on the altar stairs of time. Yes, it is great to dream, great to be a dreamer,

great to lie down on the hard ground at the end of a weary day and pillow your tired head on a stone, as Jacob did, and dream earth into heaven.

GREATER TO MAKE YOUR DREAM A REALITY

While it is great to dream, it is greater to be able to translate your dreams into reality. This is where Jacob failed. Straightway he tries to sell his dream. He bargains with God for dust. He would feather his nest while the feathering is good. He says to God: "If you will make me rich, I will share with you the profits." We are thinking of Jacob as a trader rather than as a dreamer; not on heaven's doorstep at Bethel, but cheating rascally Laban out of his calves and cattle in the pastures of Haran.

The people who do anything worth remembering must have their feet on the ground as well as their heads in the air. But they must not barter what is over their heads for what is under their feet. They must be practical as well as temperamental. They must be able to make their dream come true. Some have vision. Others are merely visionary. Some have genius. Others are eccentric. It is not always easy to classify. Perhaps the line of cleavage is just here: It is in being able to translate your dream into reality.

This is where the war starts. This is where the battle begins. Here wind the long marches through the rains and the snow, the mud and the mire,

with nights on the cold ground, and hunger and pain and peril. Anybody can dream, can have spells and spasms and hysterics. Any one can feel as if he would like to be an angel and climb the golden stairs. But if that is all there is to you, you are not "the fair beginning of a time," you are not on your way to the Hall of Fame, you are merely locoed. You must be able to make your dream come true. But there is something worse than a dreamer who cannot make his dreams come true. That is a misfortune. But there is something worse.

DREAM OR DUST?

It is worse to sell your dream for dust. To be powerless to make your dream come true is a calamity, but to sell your dream for dust is little short of a crime. To betray a trust for personal gain, to dishonour a great name that you may get on in the world, to desert a friend, because you can no longer use him, to ride a reform into office and then ditch the machine, to cease to be honest because it no longer pays, to think more of your appetites than you do of your home, to become a beast instead of a child of God, is to sell your dream for dust.

It is the tragedy of many a life. What more disappointing, more forlorn, than some splendid youth with high ideals who fronts his day with strong resolve, clean of limb, pure of heart, and

lofty in purpose, until the show begins, and the devil takes him up to some high mountain and shows him the kingdoms of the world, and says: "All these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me"? Sooner than it takes to tell, his weak knees give way, and his dream has turned to dust.

It is a common collapse. Sometimes it is the struggle between soul and flesh. Few of us but are familiar with this encounter. Paul writes about it when he says: "I see a law in my members warring against the law in my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! " Who is it that has not been in the throes of that conflict? When the fight was on, which side won, soul or flesh, dream or dust? Are you an immortal, or merely a creature ruled by the lusts of the flesh?

Sometimes it is the struggle between service and self. Many a man might have been great, but he lost the vision of service. He turned his back on Him Who said: "I am among you as one that serveth." Society has turned away from him. It avoids him. No wonder! He rots with selfishness.

Sometimes it is the struggle between character and success. What a fool is he who follows this will-o'-the-wisp, this candle-fly of the swamps we call success! Yet it is the tragedy of many a

gifted life that has bartered his gods for the calves of Laban.

Sometimes it is the struggle between friendship and position. He sold out his friends. He became a Judas Iscariot, with a bribe in his hand and a stain on his soul that will not let him look honest men in the face.

Sometimes it is the struggle between God and gold, between God and Mammon. Sordid greed has him by the throat. The curse of avarice is on him. The gleam of a miser is in the look of his eye, and the beak and talons of a bird of prey mark his lost soul for hell.

Ah, these dust-worshippers! These who live with their eyes on the ground, and whose gods are under their feet! One must fight for his dream if he would keep it. They will ridicule you, they will persecute you, they will hate you, they will try to kill you. This is the way they treated Joseph. Listen to his brothers: "Behold, this dreamer cometh!" All the venom of hell is in their hate. They would like to get rid of him. They plot his destruction. They say: "Let us kill him!" And Joseph was not the only man whose brothers tried to kill him because he was true to his dream.

YOUR DREAM

What have you done with your dream? You know what it was. You remember that radiant

morning when it came to you, or maybe it was at twilight, when the mood of musing is at its best, or perhaps at high noon in the thick of toil. But it came. What have you done with your dream? Maybe this is the hour to get it back. The voices out of the unseen are calling. They bid us stand up, with our feet in the fog and our souls in the sun, and fight for our dream.

Thank God for just a dream! "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream; then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them, the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Many is the time He has turned captivity with a dream! He turns our captivity to-day. He stretches out His hand with an offer of emancipation. It is our freedom. There is something within the soul that whispers: "You can get back what you have lost, you can shake off your chains. You can become what God meant you to be!" Dare to believe it! Fight for your dreams! They may treat you as they treated Joseph. They may call you a dreamer. They may sell you into Egypt. You may have to go to the cross for your dream. Christ did for His.

Which shall it be, dream or dust, soul or flesh, service or self, honour or success, friends or place and power, the heights or the swamp, God or gold, the ladder to heaven or the cattle market in Haran?

“ And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”

“ Still mounts the dream on shining pinion,
Still broods the dull distrust;
Which shall have ultimate dominion,
Dream or dust? ”

III

THE STAIRS TO THE WONDERLAND OF DREAMS

"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."—GENESIS 28: 15.

HERE was a man who could dream, who could shut his eyes and escape life's hard realities, who could go to sleep and dream himself into Paradise, who could fall down on the hard ground at the end of a long day and lay his head on the cold ledge of a stone and forget all his troubles, and dream his tired body up the golden ladder of fancy, and his disheartened spirit along the shining rounds of hope into the land of the angels, into the wonder-world of dreams. He dreamed. What a gate opens when one reaches dreamland!

He dreamed. That is all he did. He has not added a coin to his purse, not a crumb to his knapsack, not a rag to his outfit. He has discovered no mine, he has made no new friends. The outward conditions of life are unaltered. He is where he was. He is what he was. But he is dreaming, and everything is different.

He was a wanderer. He was a youth far from

home, far from friends, and out of work. He is up against the world single-handed and weak of arm. His misdeeds have driven him from his father's home. Nevertheless, things are not as bad as they seem, else he never would have dreamed such a dream. What does life hold for him? The future seems empty, the present barren, the past bad. Why try to go on? Why not give up? Why not end it all? Why not make for oblivion instead of dreamland? A stab in the right spot, a spurt of blood, and the curtain falls on the farce of life.

But Jacob dreams, and in his dream he gets relief. The spectres of doubt and despondency and discouragement disappear. The feeling of loneliness is gone. The wolves of want barking at his heels all day and threatening to destroy him have fled. He has escaped from life's terrors through the door of a dream.

He makes a discovery. As he dreams, he beholds a new world. Skies of brass change to gold. The heavens are not empty. The skies are crowded with friends. All is not lost. The angels remain. His father and mother and brother have no room for him in the home yonder across the plain, but there is room for the wanderer up there in mansions where the light never dies.

Better still, he discovers God. There comes upon him a sense of the divine Presence. As he lies there on the cold ground, there steals about

him the feel of arms divine, and he hears a voice which says: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." He is an outcast no longer. He has ceased to be a lonely waif on the world's broad highway, and has become a child of the King.

As he looks and listens, stairs build themselves from that dull spot of earth up into the angel land of light and love and hope. The distances between a broken and discouraged man and heaven are bridged. He sees not an impassable chasm, not a great gulf fixed, but a ladder set up on earth, and that reaches unto heaven. It seems to him easy to climb. The angels will help him up and on. The tired heart can climb into rest. He need not despair. He is not defeated. He can still make something out of life. He can conquer adversity. Something bids him climb.

Then he wakens. He rubs his eyes. He passes his hand over his tired forehead and says to himself: "It was just a dream." But he says, too: "There is a chance left. The road that winds upward is still open. The best remains. I can overcome." The stony pillow is there, the hard ground on which his worn body had slept, the stains of travel are still on him, his aching body reminds him of the hard road, all the grim realities of his pilgrimage abide, but the dream—the dream—it is

there, too. The way to heaven is not blocked. On the other side of the curtain is a ladder, and at its summit is heaven, and along its celestial rungs angelic ministers come to tired mortals who can dream.

Jacob stands on his feet a new man. He shakes off his despair. Hope mantles his soul. A heart of courage is within him. The unseen attends him. He builds an altar and makes a covenant. He says: "O, God of my dreams, I worship thee. This is none other but the house of God. If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." Slinging his pack on his shoulder, Jacob is on his way from Bethel a man of destiny.

DREAMS

Thank God for dreams, for the door a dream opens into wonderland, for the swift escape it gives us from all our troubles, for the refuge it affords even though it be for one brief hour from fear and worry and black-winged despair!

A defeated man can dream, and in his dream the shame of defeat dies. His enemies are routed. His foes flee. The victory is won and the kingdom comes his way.

A starving man dreams, and his fast is broken. Hunger is appeased. The miracle of the loaves and

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fishes is repeated. The table is piled high with plenty. Want is put to rout. He has bread and to spare.

A lonely man dreams, and his homesick heart is eased of its pain. Comrades flock to his door. Friends emerge from the shadows to sit and walk and talk with him. He finds after all that somebody cares.

A broken and bereft heart dreams, and death itself is conquered. The loved whom we have lost a while come back to us. We look into faces that had vanished. We hear the still voice speak again. The grave is gone. Tears are dried. We look death in the face and deride him. "O, death, where is thy sting?" I met my beloved last night in a dream on golden stairs whose shining rounds are guarded by angels. There is no death.

And so the world is bigger and better than we thought, and life is larger and fairer than we believed. Yonder where nothing is left us but a pallet of brown earth and a pillow of stone, the stairs climb away into glory.

"Did you ever happen to think when dark
Lights up the lamps outside the pane,
And you look through the glass on that wonderland
Where the witches are making their tea in the rain,
Of the great procession that says its prayers
All the world over, and climbs the stairs
And goes to a wonderland of dreams
Where nothing at all is just what it seems?"

All the world over at eight o'clock,
 Sad and sorrowful, glad and gay,
 These with their eyes as bright as dawn,
 Those almost asleep on the way,
 This one capering, that one cross,
 Plaited tresses or curling floss,
 Slowly the long procession streams
 Up to the wonderland of dreams.

Far in the islands of the sea
 The great procession takes up its way,
 Where, throwing their faded flower wreaths down,
 Little savages tire of play,
 Though they have no stairs to climb at all,
 And go to sleep wherever they fall;
 By the sea's soft song and the stars' soft gleams
 They are off to the wonderland of dreams." *

Perhaps, like Jacob, we too have come to a place where life is empty. Maybe we have sinned and are paying the penalty. Night has overtaken us. We have lost the way. The future holds little to cheer. Nothing is left us but the clod and the stone and the sky. Why struggle on? Why continue the farce? Let the curtain fall. Let the drug do its work; a pistol shot or a plunge from the bridge, and the struggle is over.

But while we muse, something lays its spell on tired eyelids, and soon the emancipated spirit is climbing a mystic ladder up out of despair and gloom, of fear and loneliness, up above the demons that haunt the night, into that country of the angels

* Harriet Prescott Spofford.

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where hope sings its song and love paints the pictures, where happiness comes to salute us, and peace and joy hold our hand.

Then we waken with a start, and it is all gone. We are back on the hard earth, back with all our losses and troubles, our fears and sins. We are back in the glare of reality. It was only a dream. No, it was a vision. It was a glimpse of what is still possible. It was sent to summon us, to bid us stand upon our feet, to try again. It was a challenge to climb, a call to build an altar and make a covenant, to strike hands with our Maker, and say: "Thou shalt be my God."

And so thank God for dreams, for visions, for the wand that lays us under the spell of hope, for the stairs which build themselves along the heights of fancy into all the fields of desire. Yet if this were all, it would not be much. There is more in the story.

SOMETHING BETTER THAN DREAMS

Thank God for something better than our dreams, for His dream! Jacob's dream is just a picture story of God's dream for His children.

Thank God for that which comes to the homeless outcast, to the wanderers of the world, to defeated and despairing men and women, to lost and broken sinners, to those on the brink who feel there is nothing left but that last plunge into the darkness!

Thank God for that which bids us believe, whose first word is "faith," which assures us that there is more than can be seen with the senses! God so loved the world that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish. All things are possible to him that believeth. We start to climb out of the night with an act of faith. When the soul believes, its feet are already on the stairs "which slope through darkness up to God." Soon faith changes to hope, and we are saved by hope.

Then it is that the soul is ready for a vow. The hour has come to build an altar and dedicate life to God. This is why the vision came. Our dreams are dust unless we do. They tell us of what we may become, of our higher and finer possibilities in Him Who made us for Himself. We have reached the hour of worship. All things are ours. Jacob would have gone on as poor as he came, but he made the spot where he dreamed a holy place. Thus out of our stony griefs Bethel we raise, and life is forever after different.

This is God's dream for man. It is something better than dreaming that luck will change, that good will be the final goal of ill, that

———"good will fall,
At last far off, at last to all,"

that life has compensations. It is a vision of the life that is "hid with Christ in God," and whose inheritance eye hath not seen nor ear heard.

STAIRS TO HEAVEN

There is more than even this in the story. There is a new day for the man who had lost his home. There is a new life for the man who has found his God. But there is more. There are stairs whose top reaches to heaven. Thank God for that, for the ladder let down out of the skies but resting on the earth, for rounds that tie earth and heaven together! Thank God for prayer! That is the soul's supreme dream. The spirit loses itself in the divine.

The senses challenge prayer. They brand it as a fiction, a fancy, an unreality, a dream. The senses say that in prayer we see nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing; but the senses go to sleep, and the prayer world breaks in on the soul. The spirit sees, hears, hopes, worships. The spiritual has become the great reality.

Prayer is a stair on which we climb out of despair into hope, out of darkness into light, from sin to salvation, from the weary world to God, from a stony pillow to heaven. Prayer is the ladder on which the angels come down. Moses prayed, and the wilderness became a land of promise, and the bramble on Sinai a sanctuary. There in the garden Jesus prayed, and the angels came and ministered to Him. Through prayer the soul may enter the holy of holies. Prayer is the only stair with a reach high enough to touch heaven.

"Behold, he dreamed!" He prayed. That is all he did. There was not a coin in his purse, nor a crumb in his knapsack. His physical surroundings were unchanged. The earth was as hard and the skies no kinder. But he prayed. His soul has pushed out past the realm of the senses into the land of the spirit, and heaven is within his reach.

"The top of it reached to heaven." That is where heaven is. It is at the top of the prayer dream. The dream is not a lie. There is a happy land where night is no more, where sorrows are behind us, where tears will be wiped away. It all comes to him who prays. Prayer is our escape from trouble, from hunger and loneliness and despair. There is one road that can never be blocked. It is overhead. There just beyond the curtain of sense is the ladder, and its summit reaches to heaven, and along its celestial rungs angelic ministers come to tired mortals when they pray.

The angels are on the dream stairs of prayer. They are singing to us. They are calling to us. They come to help us to a better life. They come to place our hand in His Who says: "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."

IV

BOUNDLESS ACHIEVEMENT

"Of the increase of his government and peace *there shall be no end.*"—ISAIAH 9: 7.

DROP the italics and read the verse as the Jew wrote it, and it would go like this: "Of the increase of his government and peace no end."

One holiday season, among the Christmas cards sent me by my friends was one that said: "With a Christmas greeting of invincible good will, and a New Year's wish for unbounded achievement." It was from the president of a famous negro school located in the South. Racial disturbances had marred the administration of his predecessor. Inheriting such a situation, his task was not easy. After reading the card, I held it in my hand for a moment, asking myself the question: Is there such a thing as achievement without limit? There is undoubtedly such a thing as the courage of an invincible good will, and my friend who sent the card had to tap such a reservoir daily to keep his institution going. But was his dream of achievement beyond the possibility of realization?

ACHIEVEMENT WITHOUT LIMIT

Is there such a thing as boundless achievement?

If not, if achievement is limited, if we can go only so far and no further, if we can climb only so high and no higher, if we can dig only so deep but no deeper, if we can fly only so wide but no wider, if we can analyze ever so closely but never closely enough to reach the eternal secret of things, if everywhere the chase stalls and sags to a dead finish, then some day the world will be a cinder and existence a spent force.

Life grows monotonous, fades stale, withers sapless, becomes unendurable, the hour there is nothing more. Alexander died in glorious youth, they say, because there were no more worlds to conquer. There is something of Alexander in the blood of every man. Life becomes unlivable when the cup empties never to be filled again. "I have given the last cent I ever intend to give to anything," a man said to me one day when I asked him to contribute to a worthy cause. "Then you are through living," I replied. "You are a finished product, a spent force, and so far as you are concerned the show is over." In less than six months the curtain fell not to rise.

Life means a program. It must be on the march. It must be moving. Life clamours ever for the best. It is eternally reaching out, looking up, pressing on. Every day it must hear a fresh call, every night it must see a new star, every instant it must feel lifting at its feet the lilt of a heavenlier song, and when there is no more, exist-

ence gasps its final breath and rolls over in its coffin.

We are saved by hope, not by what we have, but by what we are after, by what we are seeking, by what we are fighting for, by what summons us, drags us out of ourselves. This is how we are saved. We are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. Hope that has been realized ceases to be hope. Hope that folds its wings and says the flying is finished can never save us. When your dream has come true, it has ceased to be a dream. It has lost its power to spur you on and up. Your dream is dust.

It is the eternal quest that fascinates. It is the undying adventure that thrills. It is the breathless pursuit that keeps us on our feet. When you quit work, you die. It is not the easy, but the difficult, the impossible, that sweats immortality. It is the imperative urge of the thing that cannot be done that lashes us out of mediocrity and up and on to our best. It is boundless achievement that forever allures.

Is there such a country? Or is the fancy a mirage? Are we the victims of a delusion? Is this fiery urge in our blood for other worlds to conquer, this ceaseless quest for stairs to a higher heaven, but a siren song to lure us to our doom? Must every challenge of the skies end in a tower of Babel tumbling down into dismayed ruins and a confusion of tongues, mocking man for the

wicked temerity that would storm heights which only God can hold?

These are reflections which must ever crowd in on an aspiring soul as it stands at the portal of the future and lifts its face toward the morning. How far can we go? How high can we climb? Will the day ever come when man has shot his bow, when nothing remains to be achieved, when having done his best and lost, naught remains but to turn his face to the wall?

We have grown dizzy with achievement during the past fifty years. It is a brand new world from even that of the nineties. Marvels have come to pass, miracles have grown commonplace, wireless telegraphy, television, the radio, the automobile, the victrola, synthetic chemistry, lethal gas, ductless glands, successful surgery on the valves of the heart, the conquest of tuberculosis, typhoid fever, syphilis, goiter, the crowding of malignant cancer into a corner—where will this sort of thing stop? Is it to go on forever?

Will the vein of achievement ever run out? Is there any voice in all the world that bids us continue hammering at the door of achievement, assuring us that the mine is infinite? There is. There is one voice to proclaim boundless achievement, and there is but one. It is the voice that speaks for the spiritual. It was the voice that became vocal on the lips of Isaiah when he said: "Of the increase of his government and peace

there shall be no end." If that be true, we can go on forever; and it is true.

THE EVER-INCREASING KINGDOM

Christ's kingdom for man is a realm of boundless achievement. Isaiah was describing a world in which things go on getting better forever. Let us stop for a moment and catch our breath as we try to visualize such a world. We know something of things that last, of trees that live a hundred years, or a thousand years, but some day they turn to dust, of metals that lie in the earth for a million years inactive, but when the fire awakens them into action, their brief day is soon over, of nations and civilizations that last for eras but grow corrupt and rot out and pass, of planets that last for a million millenniums and then cool and crack and are scattered on the ether sea, of inventions that revolutionize an age but are soon regarded as commonplace, of discoveries that startle the world but in a week the crowd has ceased to wonder. But here is something that never rots, that never dies down into ashes, that never ceases to be original, that never stops opening new doors of opportunity. "Of its increase there shall be no end." It is the world to which Christ Himself is the door. It is the realm of boundless achievement. The dome of religion is infinite.

There will be plenty to do in such a world. There will be no unemployment. This terror of

unemployment is the ghost that haunts every corridor of time. The average working man, some one has truly said, is more afraid of losing his job than of going to hell. It is not an idle fear. But in this increasing world of boundless achievement new jobs will offer every day, and enough for all. There "His servants shall serve Him." What a dream! There is something worse than want. It is to starve to death wanting to work and finding none in a closed world, in a world that has shut the door in the face of the man who is out of work.

It will be a realm of progress, of endless growth. Life can never become stale. Those who think the best is behind us are dead wrong. In an increasing world the best is ever ahead. Pessimists who forever croak of disaster chant a lie. Progress is often slow. It is sometimes an ebb tide. Again and again it comes without announcement. Often it is like a still small voice, for "the kingdom cometh not with observation." But the world moves. God never beats a retreat.

There are two words which solidify and strengthen and make permanent progress in Christ's world of boundless achievement. There is "government," which means that chaos has yielded to order, that the forces which make for a better world are organized. And there is "peace," which means that war, destructive war, has become a thing of the past, that enemies have been conquered and won into friends. In such a world of

government and peace there can be no back-wash from wrecked civilization. God is marching on, and His increasing dominion is endless.

In such a realm, nothing is impossible. If the increase is to go on forever, one's dream need stagger at nothing. Again and again has it been found in this kingdom that the difficult has been made easy, the impossible has been accomplished. All that is needed is to generate a sufficient spiritual dynamic. It is not the size of your task, it is the size of your power. This is the glory of boundless achievement. It forever tempts us to the impossible. "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Nothing is impossible with God. Nothing is impossible to the faith that taps Omnipotence. It was such a faith that cried: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!" What a promise for this world, and for all worlds!

We are saved by hope, but the spiritual is the continent of hope. It is the domain of achievement. This is what the living Christ offers men. It is His dream for the race. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Men find God through Him, and the dome of His world is infinite.

What will life be ten thousand years hence for those who follow the Light? It will not be hell. It will not be cinders. It will not be an extinct volcano. It would be, if your blow pipe were all, your germ slide, your drop of protoplasm. But

there is the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal. Man is not a crumb of carbon in a flame of alcohol. He is not a protoplasmic cell under a microscope. Man is spirit. He is God's offspring. He is on his way to the infinite. He is harnessed to boundless achievement. He is dreaming Godhood.

“ And still the soul a far-off glory sees,
Strange music hears,
A something not of earth still haunts the breeze,
The sun and spheres;
All things that be,
All thought, all love, all joy,
Spellbind the man as once the growing boy,
And point afar,
Point to some land of endless, endless truth,
Of light and life,
Where souls renewed in an immortal youth
Shall know the infinite.”

V

THE HIGH ROAD AND THE LOW

"To him that overcometh I will give . . ."

—REVELATION 2: 5.

"To every man there openeth a way,
And the high soul takes the high road,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between on the misty flats
The rest drift to and fro;
But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go."

AND so mankind is divided into three classes,—those who climb, and those who drop, and those who drift.

There are those who climb, who are not satisfied with either what they have or are, whose souls are set on the best. These aspire. They are forever facing the summit and storming the heights. They are ready for hardship and struggle. They will not be discouraged by difficulties nor deterred by obstacles. They cherish ideals. They follow the gleam. They have seen a star. They have heard a call, and listened to the angels sing, and they look for the morning.

Then there are those who drop to the level of

low desires, and become the creatures of their lusts. They are without ideals and aspirations, but they have appetites and passions, and to glut these they will go to the very brink of hell itself. They prefer darkness to light, and a swamp to a garden. They love dirt, and wallow in the mire. Heaven has no charms for them, for they get their thrills from eating forbidden fruit.

Then there are those who drift, who neither seek nor shun, but tamely submit. They are like dumb, driven cattle. They move along lines of least resistance. They are controlled by circumstances, and change colour with their surroundings. Without settled principles or convictions, they do as Rome does, and by Rome, I mean any old thing that happens to come along. They dwell on the "misty flats." Their heaven is mediocrity, and their God a crowd. They are like driftwood on the tide. When the tide goes out, they go out. When the tide comes in, they come in. When there is no tide, they stay put. When the waters are clean, they are not soiled; but when the waters are muddy, they are yellow. They are like lead, like putty, like sawdust and ashes, like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

These are the three classes. What makes the difference? Why is it that some climb, and some drop, and some drift? All are made in God's image. All belong to the same race and live in the same world, and are possessed of the same limit-

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less possibilities. Why do some prefer the high road, and others the low road, and still others no road at all? Why does one man struggle for the best, and another surrender to the worst, and still another, declining both struggle and surrender, submit to whatever happens to come along? Why is one full of ambition, and another dough-faced? Why does one covet the stars, and another burrow in the earth? The explanation is not easy, but the fact is inescapable.

And all of us belong to one of these three classes. Which is yours? And which is mine? Are we climbing higher, or dropping lower, or drifting aimlessly further and further from any settled purpose in life? Are we in the business of trying to become better ourselves, and of seeking to build a better world; or do we line up with the things which tear down, and do we stand ready to knife any virtue that is in the way of our descent into hell? Are we traveling the high road, or the low?

THE CALL TO THE HIGH ROAD

God summons us to the high road. The promise is to him that overcomes, not to him who is overcome. The call is always to the heights. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." "He bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them." The transfiguration is always a mountain-top ex-

perience. "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed . . . blessed, blessed!" When God has anything great to say, He calls us to the heights. He is constantly summoning us to be more than we are, to be better than we are. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

To reach the heights is not always easy. The high road is the way of the cross. It is the way of hardship and suffering, of self-denial and sacrifice, of conflict and struggle. It is by these the heights are won. The summit waits to be occupied by those who are willing to pay the price. "I have called thee to suffer," was Christ's message to Paul. It was a call to suffering because it was a summons to travel the high road. It is the same for all. But if it takes us to the heights, why complain?

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit, nor stand, but go;
Be our joy three parts pain,
Strive, and hold cheap the strain,
Dare, never grudge the throw."

The heights are open to all. So are the depths. So are the swamps. Each may choose his land of

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desire, but if he would climb, God does not bar the way. The passions and lusts of the flesh may try to hold him down. The voices of pleasure may seek to lure aside. The forces of evil may do their utmost to mislead and turn back. But the voice of the God Who dwells on the heights is saying: "Come, come on, come up higher!" "Whosoever will may come."

WHAT THE HIGH ROAD HOLDS

Behold the promise: "To him that overcometh." God gathers the things which await those who choose the high road. Seven times in swift succession the promise is made to "him that overcometh," and each time the promise is followed with a new and a fuller inheritance for the soul that seeks the heights.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." The tree of life grew in the first Eden. It was lost when Eden was lost, but it was not lost forever. The tree of life may be found. It is still growing on the high road, and those who overcome may eat of its fruit and live.

"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." There is a second death. The first death is bad enough, but the second is far worse. But there is a way to escape. There is no way of escape on the low road. All the horrors of the second death await those who go that way.

But there is no second death on the high road. For those who climb, the first death becomes a mere shadow, through which one quickly passes to discover that the sun is shining in unclouded glory on the everlasting hills. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name." On the high road, one comes to the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name. There is the hidden manna. We shall never be in want. We shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. There is the white stone, the mystic symbol of our citizenship, the passport to all the countries to which we may come as we travel the high way. And there is the new name, which is for those who bear it a guarantee of safe conduct and of secure standing among the real nobility of the world.

"He that overcometh, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." The new name is not an empty title. It clothes its owner with power. Slavery and servitude are behind him forever. He has already climbed high enough to have some things under him. The nations are there. History is not made by the crowd, but by individuals who live above the crowd "in public acting and in private thinking."

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“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” A white robe to match a white life! It is the symbol not of what one is doing or acquiring, but of what he is becoming. Sin is losing its power. Perhaps we never climb high enough to be entirely beyond the reach of temptation, but we do climb high enough to get from under its dominion, to wear the white robe, to exchange the rags of sin for the raiment of sainthood.

“Him that overcometh, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God.” There is something beyond saintliness. It is service. That is what the pillared presence in the temple means. There is something better than ruling the nations. It is producing the civilization that is above all names. Society will reach its best when men no longer need governing, but when each governs himself under the law of love. Then it will not be necessary to have laws and courts and prisons, for each will seek the other’s good, and love will be the fulfilling of the law. Then when we are high enough to be pillars in the temple of God, we shall see the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.” We have reached the summit. There is nothing beyond this. We started with the cross, but we have reached the throne. There has been a gradual ascent, and there at the sum-

mit is not a throne of earthly power, but the throne of God and of the Lamb. Now we begin to understand what was meant where it says: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." It means coronation.

These are the things behind the promise. They wait for those who travel the high road,—the tree of life, escape from the second death, the hidden manna and a white stone and a new name, authority over the nations, the white robe, the pillar in the temple of God, and a throne seat in glory. It is a pictorial way of saying that all that is worth having and becoming is there for the soul that is great enough to aspire and struggle and climb. Then as the book closes, as though God would remind us of all that had been said at the beginning, He repeats the promise, and says: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

WHICH ROAD?

"To him that overcometh I will give" Have I heard the call? Which is my road, the high or the low? How am I living? Let me stop and take my bearings. What is my attitude to temptation? Am I overcoming evil, or am I being overcome by it? Am I strangling temptation, or are its hands on my throat and is it choking to death all that is fine in my life? Is it turning my

dream to dust? Am I going down, down, down, not realizing the descent, perhaps, until I look back and see where I was, and find that things which once shocked me shock me no more, that sins I once abhorred I now regard as harmless indiscretions? Perhaps I am saying the world has changed. No, the change is in me. The world is the same. God and truth and decency and virtue have not changed, but the road I travel drops deeper into the dark.

There are no promises for the low road. There may seem to be. The thing that is easiest can always be plausible. It is an adept in make-up. It shines a halo. But on close inspection its halo is tin. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." There is no gospel for him who is on the way to hell. There is only condemnation and warning. Why keep on? Why not turn about and travel the other way? Suppose the road is rough and steep. If it takes us toward the throne, it is the road for a great soul.

It is for each to decide. We select the road to travel. We may not be able to explain what makes the difference in the three classes, but we do know that life develops in line with choice, and it is for each to choose. If one would go to heaven, the road is open. If his soul is set on hell, the way is wide and there are no gates to stop him. But each must decide for himself.

“ To every man there openeth a way,
And the high soul takes the high road,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between on the misty flats
The rest drift to and fro;
But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.”

But God is saying once, twice, seven times: “ To him that overcometh I will give . . .” And then, as though to send the call ringing into our inmost souls, He packs it all into a single line, and says: “ He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” Let us climb!

VI

THE VISION OF THE VALLEY

"The burden of the valley of vision."—ISAIAH 22: 1.

HE is not speaking of the mountain of vision, but of the valley. Usually when we want a great view, we climb to a high height. We get on the roof of the world and look out. We ascend to some lofty peak that commands the landscape for miles, and from that sublime vantage get our vision.

But Isaiah is saying: "If you really want to see, instead of climbing up, you must climb down; instead of getting the world beneath your feet, you must get down at its feet; instead of looking beneath you, you must look above you; instead of being on a mountaintop, you must take you to the valley."

This phrase "the valley of vision" becomes the more significant when we bear in mind that it is addressed to a race of mountaineers. They were familiar with the heights. They knew what it meant to stand on some tall peak and look north and south and east and west and see the world stretching away into the dim distance where land and sky merge into the curtain that hides the infinite. Yet to these mountaineers familiar with

the sights which are seen from the tall peaks, he writes not of the mountain but of the valley of vision.

Those who know mountain people and mountain life understand why. The vision from the mountaintop is occasional, while that from the valley is steady and continuous. The summer tourist may select a crag for a perch and build his cottage there, but the native who shuns the rigors of winter and who has felt the keen edge of the fierce winds which sweep the heights prefers the sheltering valley, and builds his cabin under its protecting wall. Hence the sights he sees from day to day, and which fill his picture book of life, are valley scenes. Then, too, if you want distinctness, you must look up and not down. The mountain-top view is so big, so widely extended, and so often hedged about with mists, that its features are blurred, and the image indistinct. But the vision in the valley is close to reality, and down there you see things as they are.

THE VALLEY GLORIFIED

Thus we find this nation of mountaineers who dwelt in the Holy Land glorifying the valley. If one will read the Bible with this thought in mind, he will be struck with how the valley has written itself into the literature of the Jews. When the final hour came to His servant, God took Moses up to the top of Mount Pisgah and let him look

over into the land of promise, but when God buried the old leader, He buried him in the valley, so that when Moses opened his eyes on the heavenly Canaan, it was not from the top of Pisgah, but from that low grave in the glen. "And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor."

When Job paints a picture of rest at the end of life's long day, he says: "The clods of the valley shall be sweet." And when he would portray conquering force, he says: "The horse paweth in the valley and rejoiceth." If he had set him climbing some goat-path amid the mountain crags, his war horse would have been helpless. But look at him down there in the valley, with the big peaks rising around him, with nostrils distended and mane flowing, pawing the earth, rejoicing in his strength, and going on to meet armed men. It is a picture of power.

When the poet would sing of beauty, he writes of the flowers of the valley, and of the "beauty in the head of fat valleys." When he recites victory, he declares that every valley shall be exalted, and when the portrait of a hero is painted, he is described as the "rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley." Thus it was the valley rather than the peaks which interpreted life for those mountaineers.

Some of the great chapters in their stormy career are valley chapters. There was that fate-

ful incident when the day was not long enough for Joshua to smite his foes and the sun halted in its course, and down there in the Valley of Ajalon the moon tarried until the day's work was done. There was another high time for Israel when down in the Valley of Salt David smote the Syrians with a frightful slaughter and got a great name for himself. It was another famous occasion when the Philistines swarmed into the Valley of Rephaim and David heard what was significant in a quiet valley, but what would have meant little on the wind-swept heights. He heard the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, and executed a flanking movement and smote the Philistines from Geba to Gaza. Is it strange, then, that these mountaineers whose heroic exploits were valley campaigns should glorify the valley?

And so we find them interpreting life and expounding religion in terms of the valley. We find the prophet proclaiming the burden of the valley of vision, and saying: "If you really want to see, instead of climbing up, climb down."

THE VISION FROM THE DEPTHS

The issues of life become distinct as we view them not from the heights but from the depths. We are fond of the heights. We want to get up. We would dwell above the reach of misfortune and trial, of hardship and calamity. We sigh for peace and prosperity, for success and exemption. We

feel that God's blessing is on us when the cup empties of trouble.

Yet the fact is that people who escape trouble miss growth. The hardships of life are growing pains. Those who seek ease live on the surface. It is amid trials that we make our great discoveries. When we are hardest hit, the heroic develops. It is in seasons of severest testing that the best in a man comes to the front.

All this came out in a striking way in Christ's own ministry. One day He took three of His disciples to a mountaintop, and was transfigured before them. They saw His divine glory. They were dazed, bewildered, all but blinded. They did not seem to see much. Just to make conversation, one of them suggested: "Let us stay here and enjoy the scenery." They did not really see what the transfiguration meant, until they went down from the mountaintop into the valley and looked into the face of human need. Then they discovered that glory consists not in dwelling apart on heights of privilege, not in spasms of rapture, but in ministering to the afflicted, and in lifting the burden from weary hearts.

Again He took them into the valley. They had been on ambition's heights, quarrelling about who was to be greatest, swollen with pride, forgetful of service. Then Jesus said: "Let us descend," and taking a towel He washed His disciples' feet. There in that vale of humility they had a vision

of real greatness. They saw that men are great not as they are served, but as they serve.

Thus Christ was ever teaching His disciples from the depths. To travel with Him they must linger in the valley. It was the way He taught Paul. Take the experience recorded in the eleventh chapter of Second Corinthians. It is a valley chapter. In it Paul recites his hardships. What a catalogue of calamity! The chapter is full of stripes and prisons and deaths, of shipwrecks and stonings and nights in the deep, of perils of waters and perils of robbers and perils of the heathen, of perils in the city and in the wilderness, of weariness and painfulness and watching, of hunger and thirst and fasting, of cold and nakedness. But it is not a chapter of shame. It is a chapter of glory. That is what he tells us in the twelfth chapter. He says: "I will come to visions and revelations." The valley chapter is followed by the vision chapter. Having gone down, he is now taken up. He says: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." Paul was made in the valley. Thus Christ deals with His followers.

Sometimes He takes us into the valley of loneliness. We are homesick for friends. There in the solitude, we discover what a friend is worth. We see our neighbour as we never saw him in the crowd. We discover that he is not a competitor but a comrade. We find that "no man liveth to

himself," and that life is enriched not as we defeat our fellowmen, but as we win them.

Sometimes He takes us into a valley of remorse. We must pay the penalty for sin. It is a dark and dreary valley, but many enter there, whither dissipation and excess lead. What desperate hours the soul spends in its damp shade! It is the kind of thing that drives to suicide. Yet under the lashings of remorse some things become plainer. We see sin as we never saw it before, as we never could see it from the heights. We stand up from its madness, and swear by all that is holy we will be done with hell forever.

Sometimes it is the valley of misfortune. Reverses come. Loss overtakes us. We are down in the depths. But there in the valley we discover the real values of life, treasures which fire cannot burn, values no break in the market can imperil, values not of money, but of honour, of integrity and love.

Sometimes it is a valley of suffering. It is an experience of physical pain. But the vision is spiritual. Pain becomes sacramental. Under its discipline the soul ripens. People who never suffer are immature. They know little of the real meaning of life.

Sometimes it is a valley of sorrow, of bereavement. What lights shine in that valley! And what discoveries we make! We begin to appreciate those who have left us. We miss them.

Loves that had been treated as commonplace possessions are invested with a preciousness beyond words, now that the jewel has slipped from our fingers.

Sometimes it is the valley of death. The curtain falls, and all natural lights fade out. But in that darkness we see what we never saw before. We see the worth of heaven, of faith and hope, of God and of eternity. We see how cheap time is if time be all. And so it is in the valley the Great Teacher gives us the profoundest insight into life.

This is what the Bible means when it speaks of the "valley of decision." Great decisions are made in the storm hours, in seasons of trial, in the furnace of affliction. "Who passing through the Valley of Baca make it a well." We pass through the valley of mourning and find there the real and unfailing springs of life.

It is what the old prophet meant by the vision of the valley of dry bones. There is a power that makes the dead live again, that changes desolation into a garden. It is what Hosea meant when he says: "I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope." There

" . . . sudden the worst turns the best to the brave."

There in the valley despair changes to expectation. And so we are saved by hope.

It is what the Psalmist means when he speaks

of "the valley of the shadow of death." There in the valley we discover that death is only a shadow cast by a passing cloud, a shadow with the sun shining above it, a shadow that will pass.

VALLEY DAYS FOR OTHER NATIONS

There are other peoples whom God leads as He led that nation of mountaineers long ago. America has had her valley days, and Europe has had hers, and China is having hers. And so God still teaches as He taught.

Through these experiences our eyes are opened to realities. We see life stripped of conventionalism, of frivolity and artificiality. We discover the greatness of simplicity, of genuineness. We learn to respect people not for wealth or family or position, but for what they are. We discover that to have the world's respect one must deserve it.

Under the spell of these valley visions people are made over. Hard times summon us to the heroic. Testing times challenge the best. There are big things to do. The idler is transformed. The dreamer is awakened. The spendthrift is shamed, and many a common man is found to possess the stuff out of which saints and heroes are made.

There in the valley the nation discovers the value of freedom. In the fat years on the heights it was taken as a matter of course, but when one suddenly finds that he must fight or lose his free-

dom, the surpassing worth of freedom is revealed. It is worth dying for. All gains cease to be of value when we lose our liberty.

There in those valley days the glory of service is discovered anew. A nation learns that it is great not as it is served, not as it makes other nations do for it, but as it follows the example of Him Who said: "I am among you as one that serveth." Hard by service stands sacrifice. How the cross gleams like a bar of gold! How Calvary has come to its own when God calls His people to pass along the road of suffering and hardship! Then even death ceases to be a fear. There in the valley we find that death is just an incident along the road of service.

There in our valley experiences we learn to be friendly. We find that we need each other. We discover the mischief of what divides, the sanctity of what unites. We rise above creedal and racial and national barriers. We have caught a vision of brotherhood, and discovered that the great goal of civilization is to be friendly.

And so thank God for the valley! Let us not be depressed when He takes us by the hand and leads us down a winding path and says: "Tarry a while in the valley." He has something to show us, some great disclosure to make, some sublime revelation to unfold, some transcendent gift to bestow. He is a real prophet of the future whose message is the burden of the valley of vision.

VII

TEMPTED TO HEROISM

"Let us go into Judea again."—JOHN 11: 7.

THIS is Christ's challenge to His friends,—not to His foes, but to His friends, to His followers, His disciples, to those who have accepted Him. To those who doubt, who are disposed to reject Christ, there is another challenge. To such He says: "Try me. Test me. If any man will do my will he shall know." But Christ has a challenge for His friends, also. This is His challenge to them. "Let us go into Judea again."

THE INCIDENT

To understand what is involved in the statement, we must recall the occasion. Christ had been driven out of Judea. There His enemies sought to kill Him. They had actually stoned Him. The account is given us in the preceding chapter. But Christ escaped and sought refuge beyond Jordan, where John had baptised, where Christ's ministry started. Great crowds come to Him there. Many are converted. At last He has reached a place where He is appreciated, and where He can do His work unmolested.

A call has come to return to Judea. It is urgent.

It comes from His friends who need Him. It is a message from that little home in Bethany which came nearer being a home to Christ than any spot on earth. His friends are in trouble. Lazarus is desperately ill. In their distress, his sisters send for Jesus, their dearest friend, to come. It is a call back to Judea, back to the enemy's country, where they tried to kill Him, where He encountered the fiercest opposition and the bitterest hatred. It is a call to leave popularity and friends and converts and success, and go back to Judea. What shall He do?

He waited two whole days before announcing His decision,—probably not before reaching it, but before announcing it. Shall we say that He was Himself undecided and afraid to return? I think not. And yet He was human enough to enjoy the peace and appreciation which came to Him there by the riverside. It was an oasis in the desert. It was balm to a weary heart. But Christ was not afraid to return. He did not hesitate because of peril.

He waited for the sake of Mary and Martha, and for the sake of His wider ministry, too. He was about to do a wonderful thing, to raise the dead, to manifest His mighty power. He was about to show them that He was not dependent on dates. There was no need to hurry. Delays are not defeats. There was no possibility of failure. This was one reason.

Another was for His disciples. He would give them time to take in the situation, to talk it over among themselves. They did, and saw the peril. They were thoroughly frightened. They said: "It will never do to go back." They were sorry for the folks at Bethany. It was too bad that Lazarus had taken sick at the wrong time, but they cannot expect Christ and His disciples to imperil their lives in order to serve him. It will never in the world do to venture back into Judea.

Then Christ announced His decision. He said: "We will return. Let us go into Judea again." It took away their breath. It threw them into a panic, and filled them with dismay. They said: "It must not be." They began to protest, to point out the danger of the situation. They say: "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" "You have forgotten what you ran away from. You are doing good here. The crowds are great, the converts are many. We must stay."

At first flush Christ's reply seems miles away from the subject. He seems to be dreaming, to be thinking about something else. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" What does He mean? What has that to do with Judea? But Christ is not as far away from the subject in hand as He seems. He is saying that man's life is a plan. He has work to do. As long as he is in the path of duty, he is safe. "Are there not twelve hours

in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world; but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth because there is no light in him." Duty is the day. Desertion of duty is the night. When duty is deserted, we are in darkness, and stumble. Back to Judea is our duty. What if there are perils there? The road is aflame with light. Let us go.

Then after a moment He seems to say: "Let us remember that our friend Lazarus is there. Shall we desert him? Has he no claims on us? Shall we allow peril to frighten us? Shall the desire for personal safety lead us to desert and betray a friend? Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. Let us go and waken him out of his sleep. Friendship as well as duty is calling."

Again the disciples protest. They say: "Let him sleep. It will do him good. Sleep is sweet, and he needs rest. It will not hurt him to be laid aside from active work for a while." "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Then Christ tore off the mask and bluntly told them the truth. "Lazarus is dead." "Let us go."

The last word was spoken by Thomas. He was the doubter. He said a thing that was either very fine or very shameful, just as you take it. In either case it was the word of a pessimist. He says: "Let us go that we may die with him." With whom?

Did he mean to die with Lazarus? At first it

sounds so. "Lazarus is dead. Let us also go that we may die with him." Is he sullen? He seems to say: "Lazarus is dead and the Master is determined that the rest of us shall soon be dead. He has made up his mind to place us all in jeopardy with this foolish trip back to Judea. He will be the death of all of us. Lazarus is dead, and we shall soon be dead, too. But it has to be. Let us get through with it as quickly as possible." If this is what he meant, shame on Thomas!

But suppose he meant: "Let us go and die with Christ, with our Lord and leader. He has determined to return to Judea to place Himself once more in the hands of His enemies. We cannot dissuade Him, but we love Him. We will not desert Him. We will stay with Him to the end. If He will go to His death, we will walk by His side, and die too." Is this what he meant? If so, it was splendid, sublime. It was pessimistic, but it was magnificent.

So they went back to Judea, back into the enemy's country, back into the zone of peril, back where persecution sought them at every turn, and death lurked behind every shadow, back where the happy days on the banks of the Jordan with eager listening crowds and the hush of reverent devotion and the joy of hearts surrendering to the Saviour's love must all become but a memory. They went back to Judea.

This is Christ's challenge to His disciples. It

is His summons to His followers. It is what He says to those who lean on Him for salvation and look to Him for leadership. Christ tempts men to heroism.

THE SPELL OF THE HEROIC

Jesus tempts us to forget ourselves and think of our task, to despise peril and hail hardship, to be oblivious of personal loss or danger or disaster, to think more of our cause than of our comfort, to lay down our lives rather than desert our work.

One must reach this before he can follow Christ back to Judea, indeed, before he can follow Him anywhere, before he can live an hour in real fellowship with Him. Christ's true comrades are always comrades of the cross, and one must reach this, too, before he is of any real value to society and civilization, before he is worth much to either God or man.

As long as one asks: "What am I to get out of this?" he is on a commercial basis. He is trying to exploit society for individual profit. As long as he keeps on thinking of himself, complaining that he is not treated right, whining and whimpering because he does not get attention, sullen because he is slighted and overlooked, he is simply one in a mob of midgets. He is merely an insect in a swarm of humanity clamouring for his crumb. But when he forgets himself and thinks of his cause, when he welcomes peril as a chance for

service, when he takes up his cross and fears not to lay down his life, he leaves the mob, escapes from the swarm, and gets into the hero class that changes civilization.

This is the temptation Christ sets before men. It is what He has been doing since that day long ago when He hung under a leaden sky on a weary cross and died for His cause. Christ has been tempting men to the heroic. He has been filling earth with deeds of heroism. He has been sending out into all the fields of human need men and women with the hero spirit.

He has made this temptation stern with the face of duty. He has told men that they are safe only when they are in the path of duty, let duty lead where it may. It is not what pleases, it is not where languor invites nor rest beckons nor gain captures, but where duty summons. Languor enfeebles. Lust rots. Gain seduces its votaries. Only duty ennobles. To walk in the light one must travel duty's road.

He has made temptation to heroism sweet with friendship. He has motivated peril with love. He has taught men that they are brothers. Hate is hell. Suspicion and envy are hate's offspring. Love is a star, a sun. Let love summon, and danger will never affright.

Then to duty and friendship Christ has added the spell of Calvary. He tempts men to heroism with the charm of that sweet story of old. He

shows them the picture of a green hill far away. He clothes the cross with the fascination of His Own personality, with the glory of His Own devotion, until men say: "As He laid down His life for us, let us lay down our lives for the brethren." Thus He leads the way back to Judea on and ever to the heroic.

ARE WE TEMPTED?

Jesus is ever calling His followers to dwell on the glory of the cross. The Holy Supper is itself a summons. The splendour of sacrifice glows like the glory of the sun in this simple sacrament which Christ's followers have been keeping all through the long years. As one gathers in this fellowship, he must feel something more than the hush of a heavenly peace, he must sense something more than the glow of a heavenly triumph. He must discover the Saviour of Calvary throwing down a challenge to the heroic in the soul's holiest hour of communion. It is those who have been to the cross that have a right to drink of the cup. It is those who have been crucified with Him that have discovered the meaning of true fellowship. Keeping the tryst with Christ means going back to Judea again.

It is not easy to do. We are disposed to draw back. We are frightened as were His disciples of old, and say: "Let well enough alone." We are enjoying the communion. Why this everlasting

insistence on sacrifice? Let us claim the bequest of peace, and enjoy our religion. Such followers are not ready for Judea. They have not learned the glory of real service, of true surrender, of self-denial. They are strangers to the heroic. They are after exemption rather than the crown that fadeth not away.

Some one must be tempted to heroism if Lazarus is to rise, if the tomb is to open, if the dead are to live again, and if souls are to be saved. There is only one way for a sin-cursed world to reach heaven. It is the way of the cross. Christ must have disciples who will take up His challenge, who, when He says: "Let us go," answer: "We are ready!" With a few such heroic souls He can change the world. It is not enough for the cross to comfort. It must capture. It is not enough for the heroic to thrill us. It must tempt.

VIII

THE HEAVENLY VISION

"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

—ACTS 26: 19.

PAUL'S head is up as he writes. He is speaking of the day of his coronation, of the hour when the world for him became a new world and his life a triumphant apostleship. And so he holds his head high and talks like a man who owns the earth.

Yet he is a common prisoner. He is in a hostile court before a king who can send him to exile or death with a crook of his finger. He has not even an attorney to represent him. He must plead for himself. But he is not abashed. There is no tremor in his voice, no look of fear in his eye as he faces the king and says: "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

We are familiar with the story of that vision, of how one day on the road to Damascus with a commission from the chief priests to arrest and imprison and put to death any followers of Jesus he might apprehend, a light from heaven shone down on him, and a voice said: "Paul, why persecutest thou me?" Then and there Paul surrendered. He enlisted under Jesus Christ as his

great Captain. From that time on he was a new man. Stripping off the honours of his old life, he flung them as rags in the dust of the Damascus road and went away to follow Jesus, saying ever: "What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ."

Such was the heavenly vision. Some would call it fools' gold, and Paul a fanatic to give up so much and get so little; but as we look back on what he did, on the way he has influenced the world, on his work for Christ and His kingdom, we must say: "Paul, you were right. It was a heavenly vision. Well may you look down on Agrippa's cheap throne and despise his tinsel court. Limned in living light within the heavenly vision are the radiant outlines of an eternal throne and the form supernal of the King of kings. You have a right to hold high your head, and speak free of fear. It was a great day for you and for us and for all the world when you became obedient to the heavenly vision."

THE HEAVENLY VISION COMES

There are two sides to life. One is human. Man must work out his own salvation. He must go up against the forces which surround him. He must fight his battles and build his career. We are not carried to the skies.

But if this were all, our chance would be slim. We are no match for the foes which oppose us.

We can throw no switch to sidetrack disasters that bear down upon us. One may use every effort, but the wheels grind remorselessly. The heedless crowds trample us. How helpless we are! There are lives which seem marked for disaster from the start. An inheritance of heredity and environment seems to seal their doom. If there be nothing one can lift against such a fate but the strength of a human arm and the skill and cunning of a human brain, how hopeless the lot!

But there is also a divine side to life. God is also at work. Omniscience is thinking and Omnipotence executing. As we laid a baby boy in the little grave, a mother who understood all that was involved said: "God has taken my child, and it is all right." There was no hopelessness in her voice. Death was conquered. There is an Almighty Friend planning for us. He is at work in our behalf. The eye that watches over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps. This makes a mighty difference.

And every now and then as a man travels his road to Damascus bent on his own plans, absorbed with his own schemes, like figures in a moving picture film there flashes out amid life's activities some suggestion of God's plan, some intimation of what we are for, of what we are to do, some revelation of where our safety lies and how victory is to be won. This divine suggestion is our heavenly vision.

IT COMES TO ALL

Doubtless God knows His man. There is an adaptation of the vision to individual gifts and capacities. No blunders are made in shifting the scenery. A warrior's vision is not given to a poet, or a prophet's to a trader. The vision which came to Paul summoned him to a career for which he was peculiarly and eminently fitted. God not only knows what He wants done, but He selects the best tool with which to do it. The picture He hangs before you of your life-work is a revelation of the thing you are best fitted to do.

But there is a heavenly vision for every life. Let us never for one moment doubt it. Let us decline to surrender to that lying doubt with which the foe of the happy and the good ever seeks to discomfit us. Let us refuse to give way to the blasphemy that life is stagnation, and that the future must be dead monotony. God is not partial, nor is He arbitrary. The temptation to believe that while He may think about some men He has forgotten you never comes from a friend.

There is a heavenly vision for every man, a picture painted by a divine hand on the horizon of his life, and before this picture the heart which listens reverently may hear the call of destiny, and beyond the picture the heights are waiting, at whose summit are the "shining tablelands to which our God Himself is Sun and Shield."

IT COMES AMID THE COMMONPLACE

The vision comes amid life's commonplace events. Was there ever an unlikelier day or spot for Paul to meet Christ and get a divine commission than that day on the road to Damascus? He is bent on a beastly undertaking. He is in bad company. He is in a section of the country without shrine. The hot sun is beating down upon him. The burning sands blister his feet. Were he in the holy temple, or out on Calvary where Christ was crucified, or hard by Joseph's tomb, or talking to Christ's disciples, perhaps Jesus might appear to him. But what chance can there be on that bloody trail to Damascus?

You can never tell when the vision will come. It may come anywhere, any day. Keep your eyes open and your soul attentive. One can get something out of anything. He may not always get just what he expects. Sometimes he gets vastly more. But it is well to be expectant, to stay on the lookout. Life is too short to miss a chance. We cannot afford a bad investment. The moment we are stale may hold the vision that will change all life for us.

One need not wait for exceptional opportunities. As he goes about his daily duties, let him say his prayer and keep his face toward the morning, so that when God speaks, he may answer: "Here am I!", so that when the call sounds, he may say:

"Send me!", so that when the vision flames, he may be obedient. It comes to us in the commonplace,—to the doctor as he makes his rounds, to the lawyer as he files his brief, to the clerk at the counter, to the preacher on his pulpit step. As you turn the corner of the street yonder, all at once you may discover that the ground on which you stand is holy, just as Moses did that commonplace day when he was looking for lost sheep on the back side of the desert. There before your eyes is your sanctuary in a thorn-bush. It is forever true that earth is crammed with heaven, that every common bush is aflame with God.

IT COMES AS AN OPEN DOOR

The heavenly vision comes as a call to greatness, as an opportunity for a larger life. It sounds somewhat ordinary to say: "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," but suppose he had been disobedient. Let us think of what would have happened had Paul closed the open door. The effect on himself would have been disastrous. He would have shut himself out from his great vocation. Paul would have probably dwindled down into a nobody, into a provincial Jewish rabbi. The world would never have heard of him. To the materialist, it looked as if Paul was giving up everything. What a maudlin fool to be counting all things as loss! He is not a man of vision, he is merely visionary. But Paul's dream is his one

chance for fame, for immortality, for a world career.

Disobedience would have been likewise disastrous for the world, for the future progress of Christianity, for civilization. Doubtless God could have raised up another man to do His work. But we should not have Paul's writings. The New Testament would lose half his books. The Acts of the Apostles would be a title. The founding of the Church would never get out of Palestine. Paul was the great apostle of a world Gospel. The vision was his opportunity to a ministry as high as heaven, as wide as humanity, and as lasting as time.

It is so with every man. When his heavenly vision comes, it is his chance for greatness. God has a plan for every life. Why should we doubt it? Everything in nature has a purpose, every flower, every blade of grass, every insect. Nothing walks with aimless feet. If there be a plan for things, why not for people, if for that which God makes, why not for those formed in His image? Life is not left to luck or fate. It is predestined. There is a place in the mighty plan for every one, and the individual's supreme opportunity comes when he discovers what God's plan is for his life and follows it. The heavenly vision is at least one way God has of revealing Himself. It was His way with Paul. It may be His way with you and me.

It is disastrous to despise the heavenly vision. Many a man has gone unhappy for years and lamed for life because he declined to follow God's call. People fail often not because they lack ability, but because they are investing life in the wrong vocation. They are miserable not because happiness is impossible, but because they are not where they were made to move. They are misfits. Life is like a square block in a round hole. Lives that might have stirred the world have gone to the slag dump because they were disobedient to the heavenly vision.

For youth on life's threshold, this is the great quest. Let him discover God's plan for his life,—not his plan, but God's. What does God want him to do? That is the main question. One cannot afford to make a mistake there. Let him study himself. Let him talk to his friends. Let him be earnest in prayer. Let him empty his heart of petty schemes and selfish ambition. Let him not doubt that God will reveal Himself. Then when the heavenly vision comes, let him be ready.

IT DEMANDS OBEDIENCE

There was something splendid about Paul's instantaneous and complete surrender to Christ's call. There was no halting, no summing up of difficulties, no counting the cost, no begging for time, no pleading of personal unfitness, no arguing the lack of preparation for the tremendous career

to which he was called. There was immediate, whole-hearted, and irrevocable surrender.

The heavenly vision is given a man not that he may wonder at it, not that he may gape with open-mouthed astonishment and discuss it, not that he may make a speech about it, not that he may admire it and thank God for the honour bestowed, but that he may obey it. Obedience is the only word that harmonizes with a heavenly vision.

When the light shines, the answer is: "Here am I!" There can be no substitute for obedience. Nothing can take the place of doing what God wants us to do. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," was Mary's word to the servants at Cana of Galilee. It is the word for all who wait on the King. The story is told of a student at Balliol College who was trying to make up his mind as to whether there was a conflict between nature and revelation. He was in doubt as to whether God was speaking to him in the Bible. He said he was unable to make up his mind. The minister whom he consulted said: "Make it up by five o'clock, or leave the ministry." The heavenly vision is not a thing to dilly-dally with. "Ours not to reason why." To play with the vision is to lose it. To delay is to have your dream turn to dust.

IT CALLS FOR HEROISM

The vision cost Paul all he had. No man had more to give. He laid down every earthly honour.

He endured the bitterest persecution. Again and again he calls the roll and recites the things he surrendered. But there is no tone of regret. There is ever the accent of a man who gloried in the price he had to pay. It was no mistake. Every sacrifice was an investment. Always losses turned out to be gains.

Out upon softness! The crown is won by a cross. Obedience to the heavenly vision is a costly undertaking. It costs all one has. There is never an easy road to aught worth having. He who wins must be willing to pay the price. Yonder is the vision. It is wonderful. But he who begins to count the cost, who says there is so much to give up, who feels that he can never win the heights, may rest assured the heights are not for him. He would best get out of the way and make room for some heroic life that fears not the cross.

The one thing that counts in this world is heroism. The people the world worships are those who believe in their dream enough to suffer for it, to die for it. Softness rots. Indulgence decays. Ease wins nothing but a tinsel crown. It is Calvary that saves the world. Is the soul willing to pay the price, or does it prefer to stay cheap forever? God has a plan, but man has a will, and it is for man to accept or reject.

“And the choice goes by forever
Twixt that darkness and that light.”

THEY PERSIST

The heavenly visions persist. Thank God they do! They keep on coming. A great vision dies hard. It hates refusal. It hovers about you. It keeps on storming the soul. It is difficult to get away from anything God wants us to do. The vision floats like a dream before us. It haunts us like another self. It takes up its residence in our subconsciousness, and at every chance emerges to say: "Here is the path. This is the way. Listen to me. Come away to your throne."

When one has at last succeeded in silencing the voice, in stifling utterly his great vision of life until his dream lies slain and buried beyond hope of resurrection, other visions of lesser glory come, for the good dies hard. Hope is immortal. For every man something better than he is is always possible. O, to believe it! To decline to enter the gates to the castle of the Giant Despair! What of the night? The morning cometh! This is the gospel of faith. And all dreams are dust when its prophet voice no longer speaks to the soul of man.

IX

HE DIED CLIMBING

"And these all having had witness borne to them through their faith received not the promise."

—HEBREWS II: 39.

SOMEWHERE in the Alps one comes upon a monument to the memory of a guide who lost his life seeking to ascend the mountain. The stone bears this simple inscription: "He died climbing." It recites a life of heroism. It tells of a man who fell with his face to the front. The Alpine guide died in the discharge of duty. His life was not lost, for his aim was high. He did not reach the heights, but he fell with his face toward the summit. He died climbing. And God and man say: "Well done! "

It is the story of a dreamer. It is not merely for guides whose work calls them to attempt the peaks which lose their silvery heights in never-melting snows, but for the common average life of the world,—for toilers at prosy tasks, for plodders along dull lanes, for people who work without flowers or music or sunlight, for those who grind away amid the smoke and dirt and noise of a sordid world. It sings the glory of a high aim. Instead of living in the swamps, it is better to die on the heights. Instead of fattening on com-

promise, it is better to lay down life for principle. Instead of winning fame by giving people what they want, it is better to go to a cross showing them a finer way.

“He died climbing.” It is the lesson we find enshrined in this line from the roll call of the mighty dead. “And these all having had witness borne to them through their faith received not the promise.” They had faith. They “endured as seeing him who is invisible.” They had ideals. They incarnated their dream. They were climbers struggling toward the heights, but received not the promise. They died before the heights were reached, but to their everlasting credit be it said that they died climbing, and the world has not ceased to sing of their achievement.

There was Abraham. He was promised a land of vast extent. He never owned a foot of it save the little patch of ground he bought for Sarah’s grave. But he had faith. He endured. He died climbing.

There was Moses. He surrendered the proudest throne on earth for his dream. He sacrificed all earthly ambitions. He became patriotic enough to believe that the slaves should be free. What was his reward? A nameless grave on Nebo, and the murmurings and disloyalty of the very people for whose freedom he had yielded a throne.

There was Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David, and a great host who through

faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire. These all died climbing; having had witness borne to them through their faith, they received not the promise.

It is the sublime lesson that comes to us from the life of the Saviour Himself. Judged by every material test, He failed. But measured by the worth of an ideal, His triumph is endless.

THE CLIMBERS

This is the story of many a noble life outside the Bible. All that can be said of some of the best men and women the world has known is just this: they died climbing, they fell without reaching the goal, but they fell with their faces toward the goal.

The real rulers of the world have always been a minority. They had ideas ahead of their times. They were in advance of the crowd. They announced convictions and pointed out a better way. They were voted down and out. Sometimes all they received was to get themselves crucified, imprisoned, beheaded. They died climbing. By and by the crowd halted beside their cross and said: "We were mistaken. We have put a good man to death. He was not a rebel but a patriot. He was not a fanatic but a saviour." On the spot they have taken off their shoes and uncovered their heads and worshipped.

There was Savonarola. What a message was

his! But the Church said he was dangerous, and burned him to death. But around that star in the pavement at Florence the crowds pause reverently, thrilled by the dauntless soul of a man who was great enough to die for his dream.

There was Luther. He stood like granite. Christendom was against him. But he pulled the world up-hill. There was Cromwell. For generations his name has been covered with obliquy, but he is coming more and more into his own. These are the real leaders of the world. They represented minorities, but their message was sublime, and by and by the listening world turned and followed.

How often is this story illustrated in common life! And by people whose names never get on the scroll of fame. They live and toil and die in obscurity. But they are in the path of duty. They are faithful. All around us are vicarious lives; in shop and mine and factory, on the railroad, on the high seas, on the highways, people are laying down their lives for convictions, for ideals, for a dream. Doctors die fighting disease, nurses die ministering to human need, public servants are cut off in their prime. These all having had witness borne to them through their faith received not the promise. They died, but they died climbing.

It is the story of many a philanthropist and patriot and reformer. He has summoned his fel-

low-citizens to some great reform. He has espoused an ideal of civic purity. He has refused to sacrifice his ideal for popularity. He has gone down in defeat at the hands of a public too dull to understand and too sordid to appreciate real greatness. He has been defeated, but he has not betrayed his trust.

It is the story of many a splendid youth, stricken in the morning hour, cut short in glorious prime, dying just as he takes the place in the ranks. The tragedy puzzles us. It is hard to understand. We are tempted to become bitter. But there was no failure. So long as the record is clean and the motive is high and the spirit is courageous and chivalrous, and one does with his might what his hands find to do, there can be no defeat. Death is an ascent, an achievement.

THE IDEAL THAT LIFTS

We do well to readjust our theories of life to this ideal, and remember that it is not the goal but the struggle. The search after truth must ever be something of a bootless quest. For what is truth? Ultimate truth? Essential truth? It ever flies our reach. But the struggle after truth is the thing of value. Struggle produces greatness. To the soul with an ideal, difficulties are incentives. We fall to rise.

It is not success, but principle, that is the great thing. There are people who are crazy to suc-

ceed. They are willing to pay any price, sacrifice anything, to win. They are fools. Temporary defeat is no disaster. It may be a blessing. It may be because one is not ready for victory. It may be that the enemy is not yet sufficiently ripe for destruction. It is certainly no ground for discouragement. It is far better to die fighting for principle than to succeed through its base surrender.

A city wages a campaign for law enforcement. Men and women who have faith and who put their faith into their prayers toil for a better day. When the votes are cast and counted and the campaign is lost, some are disposed to ask: What is the use? But in reality the campaign was not lost. No courageous protest against unrighteousness was ever lost.

It is not what we have, but what we are, that counts. No amount of baggage can make a man great. No quantity of extraneous good fortune can compensate for the loss of self-respect. Let one be straight, true, genuine, sincere, then it becomes impossible for the world to defeat him. No foe can take him unawares.

It is not where we are, but the direction in which we are going, that is of real importance. Some live too long for their own good. They would be greater had they died younger. Their life was an anti-climax. They had a heroic moment, then waned. If only an assassin's bullet had come at

the right time, their fame would have been secure. But they were unfortunate enough to live too long, and their horizon dipped.

It is great to die on the up-grade, to work out rather than rust out, to have the sunset find us facing the morning. It is great to die in the harness, to die climbing.

DUTY

No misfortune can overtake him who is moving in the line of duty. What seems for the moment to be misfortune will in the end prove to have been a blessing. The heights are secure for him who falls struggling toward them. It is not where the feet are, it is where the soul is. Let a man set his soul on the heights, and some day his feet will catch up, even though they must stumble through the grave to reach them. Victory is always his who is in the line of duty. Duty says: "Work on. Climb on. Live by faith and not by sight. Endure as seeing the invisible." Sight is a poor standard. The best part of one's life is the part that can't be seen. A woman had a rare rose-bush. For weeks she worked and watched and saw no result of her labour. One day she discovered a crevice in the wall not far from the bush, and slipping through the crevice had gone a tiny shoot from her rose-bush. Going to the other side of the wall, she found the roses blooming in gorgeous beauty. Some of us work on year in

and year out. We see no result of our labour. We grow discouraged. The roses are blooming on the other side of the wall. This side may be bare, but what of that? If we are faithful to duty, all is well.

“ Yea, that is life, make this forenoon sublime,
This afternoon a song, this night a prayer,
And time is conquered and thy crown is won.”

Then, whether the sunset for us be soon or late, whether the night overtake us amid the foothills or on the upper heights, they will say: “ He died climbing.” And that is fame. It is daybreak. It is heaven.

X

THE LOST CHORD

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."—REVELATION 19: 6.

IT was in Memorial Hall at Nashville, Tennessee. The Cleveland Symphony Orchestra was giving a concert. The technique of that famous group of musicians under Sokaloff seemed well-nigh perfect. As we sat there, deeply moved by what we heard, our thoughts seemed to run to the same mood. And when an intermission made conversation possible, we began to speak to each other of the great reservoir of harmony lying back in nature which the musicians were not creating, but merely suggesting and reproducing and registering in our souls.

Then some one spoke of "The Lost Chord." The words were written by Miss Adelaide A. Proctor, an English girl who published two volumes of verses. "The Lost Chord" was her one flash of genius. It was set to music among others by Sir Arthur Sullivan, the composer of "The Pinafore," "The Pirates of Penzance," the oratorio of "The Prodigal Son," and several other popular productions.

Sir Arthur wrote his music to "The Lost Chord" at midnight, as he sat by the death-bed of his brother. It was a time for musing. It was an hour for his soul to be stirred by deepest moods. He seemed to feel that life itself is a chord of music struck on the great organ of being by the hand of the Master Musician. As his loved brother slipped away from him into the great silence at that midnight hour, he found his soul pouring out its longing in the lines which Miss Proctor had written, and the music for such a song came to him out of the great deep.

"Seated one day at the organ
I was weary and ill at ease,
And my fingers wandered idly
Over the noisy keys;

I do not know what I was playing,
Or what I was dreaming then,
But I struck one chord of music
Like the sound of a great 'Amen!'

It flooded the crimson twilight
Like the close of an angel's psalm,
And it lay on my fevered spirit
With a touch of infinite calm.

It quieted pain and sorrow,
Like love overcoming strife,
It seemed the harmonious echo
From our discordant life.

It linked all perplexed meanings
Into one perfect peace,
And it trembled away into silence
As if it were loath to cease.

I have sought, but I seek it vainly,
That one lost chord divine,
Which came from the soul of the organ,
And entered into mine.

It may be that Death's bright angel
Will speak in that chord again,
It may be that only in heaven
I shall hear that grand 'Amen.' "

HEAVEN IS HARMONY

Heaven is the glory of measureless melody. It is divine harmony.

Some of the glory is music. This is what John would say: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." He is trying to describe the indescribable.

He dips his pen in the voices of a great multitude. But the tongues of the redeemed tire and grow silent in the effort to tell the story. He dips his pen in the voices of many waters, until all rivers and seas run dry in their effort to record the heavenly melodies. He dips his pen in the voices of mighty thunderings, until they, too, grow dumb in their task to utter tones which sweep from world

to world, and climb from star to star, and soar from sun to sun, saying, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Of all this matchless music we hear but little. The greatest orchestras are powerless to bring it to us. Our souls are flesh-bound. Our ears can hear but little of what is sounding through God's world. Some day the flesh will be stripped off, and we shall hear the full harmonies of heaven, and join with angels in their "Alleluia."

Some of the glory of heaven is scenery. There is harmony that comes through the eye as well as through the ear. But as yet we see only a little of that glory. Our eyes, too, are cluttered by flesh. Some day the bandages will be torn off, and the curtain rent in twain, and we shall see the sights of heaven face to face, and know as we are known.

Some of the glory is thought, as well as sound and sight. But our thought, too, is cluttered by the flesh. Brain fag and blood clot slow down our mental processes. Some day the mind will fling aside its handicap, and we shall think God's thoughts after Him.

Some of the glory of heaven is power. It is the harmony of frictionless might. Here power is cluttered by the flesh. But some day we shall lose our weariness. We shall "work for an age at a sitting, and never grow tired at all." Our heavenly rest will not be the collapse of strength,

a pause to tired feet. It will be strength that never tires and feet that never grow weary.

Some of the glory is faith. Here faith is dimmed by doubt, and ever and again must pray: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" Some day the mists will clear, and the night be gone, and we shall see face to face and be satisfied.

Some of the glory is peace. Here peace is but a lull in the tempest, a break in the storm. There peace is eternal. It is the deep content of a soul that has claimed Christ's blessed bequest when He said: "Peace I leave with you."

Some of the glory is love. Here love is imperfect. It is marred by the discords of hate and fear. Some day hate will be slain and fear exiled. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

These are some of the names we give to the strains which lie back in that vast reservoir of music and melody called heaven.

THE LOST CHORD

The lost chord is a bit of heaven overflowing time. It is a strain of celestial music sweeping the keyboard of the earthly life. It is a thrill of the infinite on the wires of the finite. Your lost chord is your highest thought, your loftiest aspiration, your sublimest longing, your holiest moment, your most unselfish mood, your strain of Paradise, a gleam of heaven in your soul.

It is that seraphic instant when your frail bark on life's wide sea drifts so near the isles of the blest that you can hear the music. It is the moment when you are closest to God, when you can feel Him and catch His breath on your soul. Then no darkening doubt can disturb you. You are sure. You have reached certitude, and wonder why you were ever afraid.

There where that one note from the organ sounds for you, you are at your best. You are what God meant you to be when He thought of you first. You are highest up toward heaven. You are in harmony with the infinite, and such a moment comes to us all. Who has not heard the lost chord? Never a soul but has had a gleam, a dream, a bar of heaven, a stream of glory in the dark.

Even in that sublime mood, somehow we feel that the possibilities of exalted living are not exhausted. The lost chord is not all there is lying back in the reservoirs of celestial music. It is just a suggestion. There is more for us than we have ever claimed, more than we have ever dared to dream. Man is ever becoming. The climb goes on forever. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." That highest hour in the soul when heaven was on the wires is just the voice of a prophet bidding us go on.

And all of this is just a certificate of the reality of that spirit world which lies back of the sensual.

Every lost chord is a harbinger of immortality. Its music never dies. The radio has taught us that much. The melody wanders on forever amid the spacious worlds. Every glimpse of glory that comes to us out of the gloom passes on, "trailing clouds of glory." Every note that drifts down out of the ether heaven into the blue and lingers long enough for human hearts to catch the sound chants hope and courage to climbing feet.

THE MYSTERY

We wonder how the lost chord gets on the keys. It seems a mystery. Sometimes it comes in moments of high daring, as it did to Simon Peter when he saw Jesus walking on the sea. He cried: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water!" When Christ answered: "Come!", it was the organ sounding its great "Amen," and Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. Sometimes it comes in seasons of spiritual uplift, when our vision clears, and we discover reality. Thus it came again to Peter when Jesus asked: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" In a flash Christ's Deity was revealed, and Peter cried: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!"

Sometimes it comes in seasons of musing and meditation, as it did to Nathaniel under the fig tree. Sometimes we hear the lost chord in an experience of transcendent privilege. Thus it came to Peter and James and John on the Mount of

Transfiguration, when they saw Moses and Elias talking to Jesus. Sometimes it comes in the loneliness of exile as it came to John on Patmos. He was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and saw the unseen. Sometimes it comes to us in the face of a friend who shows us ourselves. Thus it came to Zaccheus. Sometimes it comes when our fingers wander idly over the noisy keys. Thus it came to Paul on the road to Damascus when the light flashed and the voice cried: "Why persecutest thou me?"

But however it may come, when the great note sounds on the organ, it changes all life for us. It makes everything different.

"It floods the crimson twilight
Like the close of an angel's psalm."

The dark is made light. The dim is made plain. Doubt is dissolved. Mystery is dispelled. The storm sinks to peace. And our fevered life grows quiet.

"It links all perplexed meanings
Into one perfect peace."

Problems puzzle us no more. Providence baffles us no longer. Somehow we know that all God's ways are right. We are willing to leave things with Him. We are learning how to say with Christ: "Father, glorify thy name."

Then the lost chord leaves us. Sometimes it trembles off into silence as though it were loath to cease. Sometimes it goes with such suddenness that it shocks us, and we wonder if we have been mistaken. Is the lost chord only a dream? However it may go, it leaves us lonely and it leaves us longing. Perhaps half of life is just a struggle to get back something we have lost, a lost peace, a lost hope, a lost joy, a lost love. We would recover something we had. We would climb back to the height from which we have fallen.

RECOVERY

And so we seek for the lost chord, and we seek it vainly, "that one lost chord divine." God does not repeat Himself. The wheel never turns with the water that is past. Life goes on. Spent raptures cannot satisfy us. Yet we never tire of the old songs, and I hope some of them will be sung in heaven. Surely "Holy, holy, holy" will not be out of place there, and "O Love, That wilt not let me go." The heart will be homesick if somewhere we are not permitted to meet and greet again the "loved it has lost a while."

Maybe death's bright angel will speak in that chord again. For in that moment of dissolution eternity seems to flash out upon us. Into the dying face a look of peace and rapture steals. Eyes soon to be dulled in death are luminous with a strange light. Lips soon to be silent whisper of

a Presence. The doubt that stalked defiant in the glare of day flees as death's shadows creep closer. Who knows but once more the lost chord is sounding on the organ?

If not then, surely in heaven we shall hear that grand "Amen!" There we shall hear not only the lost chord, but all the measureless glory of heaven's melodies will be sounding. There will be not only the voices of a great multitude and the voices of many waters and the voices of mighty thunderings, but the voices of the angelic host, the voices of all those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, the voice of every creature that can silence discord and make music, the voices of the morning stars singing together for joy, the voices of chanting worlds, all saying: "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

XI

IS THERE ANY USE IN HAVING A GOD?

"Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people, and walk ye in the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."

—JEREMIAH 7: 23.

FROM the dawn of being, man has dreamed of a God. Almost the first act of conscious being was a recognition of the Power That rules the world, and of man's responsibility to his Maker. Has the time come for this dream to turn to dust? Is it out of date? Has it lost its value? Has humanity reached a stage in its development where it can dispense with the Deity? Are religious people merely hoodooed? Is there any use in having a God?

The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, consisting of the president and the secretary and a few gentlemen who have a grudge against the Almighty, answer this question in the negative. They have made up their minds to run God out of the world. It is an ambitious undertaking. It has been tried before by people as capable as the flock of A-s, and failed. These modern atheists will probably march up the hill, and then march down again. The president of the Atheists and the leader of the Fundamentalists re-

cently arranged between themselves a public debate on this question in the city of New Orleans, the leading Roman Catholic city in America. The Mississippi flowed as smoothly after their war of words as before. And He That sitteth in the heavens continues to laugh at His detractors and have them in derision.

WHAT THE ATHEISTS SAY

The atheists who tell us there is no use in having a God say that God is a fiction. They tell us He has no reality and is not needed. They affirm that He is the product of credulity, the offspring of superstition, the creature of man's imagination, begotten of fear and foisted on the unsophisticated by crafty priests. Therefore, the several A-s have embarked on a crusade to emancipate a down-trodden, God-ridden world and set the captives free. One of their favourite cartoons represents an aged man bent with years, bowed with burdens, clad in rags, carrying on his back a heavy load labeled "The Bible," wearing around his waist a chain to which drags a millstone marked "The God Idea." In front of him stands a dapper little fellow dressed in a business suit and wearing a derby hat. He represents atheism, and says to the aged pilgrim: "Old man, ditch that junk and stand up on your feet like a man, and be free." Is it worth while to pay heed to the party in the derby hat?

Ordinary mortals have been disposed to take for granted not only the fact but the value of Deity. They have assumed that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. They have felt that man's soul can no more get along without God than the lungs without air, or sight without light, or hearing without sound, or an effect without a cause. It is something of a jolt to be told by a few gentlemen in New York that we are all wrong, and have always been wrong, that a God is a bad thing for a man to have and that the race should get rid of Him.

Perhaps while we are getting rid of God we might as well get rid of some other things. While asking: Is there any use in having a God?, why not ask: Is there any use in having ancestors? Is there any use in having parents? They exercise considerable authority, too, and leave their mark on us. Why not ditch them while the ditch is handy? Is there any use in having government, a conscience, moral ideas? Is there any use in having any restraints whatever? Is it not all bunkum? Why not make a bonfire of everything that is hereditary or restrictive, and go as we blooming please and do as we blooming want, and not give a blank for anything?

It begins to look as if the assemblage of A-s, instead of getting rid of God, is merely trying to make a new one. The atheist is his own little divinity. He is the gentleman in the case. He is

simply swapping shrines. Instead of Jehovah, he would give us a sawdust Deity. Atheism is the supreme form of egotism. It is the most colossal exhibition of self-importance that has ever strutted across our little planet. It is the most pretentious splurge in the welter and muck of human arrogance and conceit that time records.

THE GODS ON THE MARKET

One's answer to the question: Is there any use in having a God?, depends on the kind of God That is on the market. Some Gods are no use. Some kinds are a disaster. A God Who is cruel, Who defies brutality, Who capitalizes fear and cultivates hate, Who holds human reason in bondage to superstition, Who fosters ill-will, is of no use. He is a monster, and such a God men have sometimes worshipped.

One wonders whether these latter-day atheists are not fighting crude conceptions of the Deity rather than the fact of Deity. False ideas of God have flourished, and have held souls in bondage and prevented human progress. They would have their hands full in fighting such crude conceptions of the Deity, and we would wish them God-speed in their undertaking if this is what they are up to. But shall we conclude because men have held false theories of God that God is not? We have held false theories of science. Shall we conclude that there is no such thing as true science? We have

had crude views of electricity. Shall we conclude that there is no such force as electricity? Men have promoted vicious forms of government. Shall we conclude that there is no such thing as sound government? Man is learning to know God better. We are getting a clearer vision of the teachings of Jesus about our heavenly Father. Because the road slopes through darkness up to light, let us not conclude that the light is a lie.

But what shall be said for a God Who makes man go straight and behave himself and treat his neighbour right? Is that kind of a God no use?

What about a God Who rebukes error and slays lust, and says to the wrong-doer: "Thou shalt not"? What about a God Who says to the liar: "Thou shalt not bear false witness"? To the thief: "Thou shalt not steal"? To the murderer: "Thou shalt not kill"? And to the libertine: "Thou shalt not commit adultery"? Society is spending millions of money in the effort to protect itself against crime. Is there no value in a God Whose influence over human life is to diminish crime, and so diminish the cost of government? This is one reason that church property is not taxed. It would be as sane for a community to tax its courts as to tax its churches.

What about a God Who can lift the fallen, and rest the weary, and comfort the lonely, and give peace and hope and courage to the spent heart? What about a God Who makes people good, Who

forgives their sins, Who saves them, Who makes them friendly and useful and happy? Is that kind of a God of no use?

What about a God Who builds a better world, Who ends the jungle, Who changes the desert into a garden, Who changes men from beasts to brothers, Who restrains the evil passions of human nature, Who ends war, Who enthrones good will and the Golden Rule and the brotherhood of man? That kind of a God is man's best friend, and the atheism that would rob us of such a friend hails from hell.

What has atheism to offer in the place of God? What has atheism ever done to help man up-hill? We know something of the kind of world it would tear down. What sort of a world does it propose to build? What kind of a world will it be in which every lust is licensed, every passion of fallen human nature given free rein, every barrier against crime thrown down, and every avenue to greed and avarice flung wide open? Such a world would be perdition. It would be the beast age of mankind. It would be the wreck of all that man has slowly built under God's guidance during the long ages. And this is what the atheists would have us take in exchange for our dream of a God Who says: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people, and walk ye in the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."

THE PRICE

The price for such a God is obedience. The trouble with the atheist is, he is not willing to pay the price. He does not like the law, and he would get rid of the lawmaker. He does not want any restraints, and he would silence forever the voice that thundered from Sinai. It is easy to understand why people with whom God interferes should want to get rid of Him. No wonder the man who does not want to quit lying and stealing and killing and drinking liquor and gambling and committing adultery should cheer atheism.

Recently while on a visit to a Southern city, a lady was telling me of her experience while she was on a visit to a city in the West. She is a devout Christian woman, and on this visit was introduced to a group of people whom she described as very charming, but somewhat dissipated in their social habits. Among them was a banker who commanded her admiration because of his personal charm and evident sincerity. He gave her *Elmer Gantry* to read, insisting that she was somewhat hypnotized by the clergy, and desiring to disillusion her. She read the book and returned it, regretting that she had ever opened its pages. He asked her what she thought of the book, and she said: "Perhaps now and then there is a preacher who goes wrong, but it would be as unfair to condemn all preachers because one goes wrong as to

regard you and all bank presidents as crooks because one turns out to be a defaulter." This conversation took place on a Thursday afternoon. The next afternoon we picked up the daily paper and read the story of her friend the bank president's defalcation. He had been caught stealing from his bank, had been arrested, had admitted theft amounting to one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, and was behind the bars being held for trial. He will probably serve his term in prison. It is no wonder that such a man likes *Elmer Gantry* and says: "No God for me! "

Obedience is the price. The religion that professes God but declines to obey Him is a sham. Such disobedience no more disproves a God than crime disproves government. "Obey my voice and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." This does not mean that God is for sale, nor that His favour is to be purchased by obedience. It does mean, however, that the only way to possess Him is to do His will, and that those who do His will will be convinced of His reality.

It is sin that causes doubt. When the doubter gets rid of his sin, his skepticism vanishes like fogs and mists before the rising sun. This is the challenge of Christ. "If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." Those who decline to do His will have blocked their own way to knowledge. "Blessed are the pure in

heart, for they shall see God." They alone can see Him. They alone have the right. It would not be safe to invest a dirty life with a trust so holy.

GOD WILL STAY

God is here to stay. All efforts to run Him out of the world will fail. He will continue to bless those who trust Him and strive to obey His will. Some may deny Him, but they cannot escape Him. It is easy to understand why those who would not be held back from sin might hail the news of God's death with satisfaction. It is easy to see how the man who wants perfect freedom in debauchery and in taking what he wants from his neighbour should prefer the atheist's creed, but even those who reject God cannot cheat Him. They can no more run away from penalty than they can from their own shadows. It is simply a question as to whether they will have Him for a friend or a foe.

Those who seek Him as a friend will not be easily convinced that God is a sham. He keeps faith. He is out for human welfare. The things on which God frowns are hostile to man's happiness; and the things He promotes minister to man's peace. "Like as a father pitieth his children" must be painted into every true portrait of Deity. The Christian's God is supreme goodness and supreme wisdom and supreme power personified in

Fatherhood. It pays to capture the friendship of such a God. It pays to do right. It pays, not necessarily in money, but in character, in influence, in happiness, in service, in destiny. The world has only contempt and resentment for those who have tried to rob them of their dream of God.

There fell into my hands recently a little pamphlet containing a father's tribute to his only son. It was read at the son's funeral. The young man was Rufus Fearing Dawes, the son of Charles G. Dawes, the Vice-President of the United States. Mr. Dawes, among other things, says of his son: "He commenced early in life to set himself against the crowd, for no man rises to real prestige who follows it. Of his own initiative he joined the church. For a long time he taught a Bible Class of boys at Bethesda Mission. He did not smoke nor swear nor drink. He was absolutely clean. Yet in his stern opposition to the drift he mingled tolerance in just that quality which contributed to real power to be used in opposition and for that purpose alone. He organized systematically rescue squads for weaker boys at college who were wavering before strong but evil leadership. Against the boy who sought to lead astray the weaker, he set his face like steel. . . .

"But yesterday strong and joyous, in the full might and swing of buoyant youth, surrounded by his loving friends, the sun of his happiness high in the sky, Rufus Fearing was mercifully spared

the sight of grim Death, whose unseen hand was even then upon his shoulder. But had this happy boy turned and seen him beckoning him away from the dear ones, from his home, from his parents and his sister, from the great battlefield of life with its fine victories to be won, you know and I know that without complaint, clear-eyed, unafraid, in simple, unquestioning faith, with hope and trust in his Lord, my dear son would quietly have followed into the darkness of the shadow."

Atheism will make no headway, in an attempt to rob such a man of his faith in God. And there are millions like him, with a faith as strong, who have met the Saviour along the shadow paths of life.

There is a profound significance in the answer our little children are taught to give to the question in the catechism which says: "How do you know that you have a soul?" The answer says: "Because I can think of God and the world to come." The hog cannot think past his snout, the horse his trough, the cow her cud; but man can think of Deity and immortality. That lifts him to the top of creation. Some may prefer to live on the hog level. We are free, and each may have his choice. But the most of the race, probably all but morons and freaks, will continue to prefer the plane of Deity, and keep on thinking of God and the world to come, lifting their thoughts skyward and claiming His promise Who says: "Obey my

voice, and I will be your God," kneeling ever and again with the chambered nautilus on the shores of time, and praying to the Maker of men and worlds:

" Build thee more stately mansions, O, my soul,
As the swift seasons roll;
Leave thy low-vaulted past,
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell
By life's unresting sea."

XII

AMERICA AND THE SPIRITUAL

"Worship God."—REVELATION 22: 9.

THIS is almost the very last line of the last chapter of the last book in the Bible. It is as if the writer would say: "If you forget everything else in the book, don't forget this. Worship God. If you fail to do everything else the Bible tells you to do, don't fail to do this. Though you break the commandments and forget the Psalms and despise the prophets and turn your back upon the Sermon on the Mount and scrap the Golden Rule, don't drop so deep down in hell's deepest pit as to become an atheist. Worship God."

John was about to worship an angel. He was down on his knees at the feet of the man who showed him these things. But the angel said: "Get up. Don't worship me. Worship God."

He was about to worship the messenger. It was a gifted messenger, and he had brought him a glorious message. He was telling of a country watered by the river of life, on whose banks the tree of life was growing and whose leaves were for the healing of the nations, a country where there was no more curse, where God's children

wore His name in their foreheads, where there was no night, no need of candle or sun, where those happy enough to reach such shores reign with God forever and ever. No wonder John was ready to go down on his knees before such a messenger! But the messenger said: "Don't do it. Don't worship me. Worship God."

John was about to mistake the world for its Maker, civilization for religion, ecstasy for redemption, privilege for attainment, adventure for achievement, the temporal for the eternal, the spectacular for the spiritual. He was about to believe his eyes instead of his soul. The angel stopped him, and showed him his blunder, and said: "Worship God."

It is an easy mistake to make. Who has not made it? Who has not been tempted to worship an angel? Who has not thought so much of the messenger or of his message that he has forgotten Him Who sent the messenger? Who has not mistaken civilization for the kingdom of God? Science for truth? Force for power? Progress for God? It is an easy mistake to make. These things cast such a glamour. They hypnotize us. But the blunder is perilous. Is it a mistake we are making here in America? Are we paying too much attention to the physical and the sensual and the material, and too little to the spiritual? If our people could catch the supreme message, would they not find it to be the message that has been

echoing down the centuries from the closing page of the inspired canon: Worship God!

AMERICA CHASING ANGELS

Is America chasing angels and forgetting God? We are coming more and more to observe the anniversary of Armistice Day. It is a day that for many reasons should be remembered. The memory of it should save us from the folly of another war. It should speed up every effort sane and forward-looking nations can make to prevent future wars. It should convince America of the wickedness of any course that would reduce her influence or diminish the power of her testimony for world peace.

We are accustomed to ponder the woes of Europe. Surely Europe has had woes enough. It came out of the World War stripped, broken, crushed, well-nigh bankrupt in every asset of hope. But Europe is recovering. Some of the nations of Europe have still far to go, but others are worth more to-day to themselves and to the world than before the war. What a comeback Italy has staged under Mussolini! France and Germany are both coming rapidly into a new and a better day. The new republic in Southern Europe has brought emancipation to millions. Even Great Britain, hardest hit of all nations by the disasters of the World War, is coming out of these trying years disciplined, with the great soul of her country

chastened by suffering and made stronger for her service to humanity. Therefore, we need not waste many more tears over the woes of Europe.

But what about America? We were at our best during the war. We forgot ourselves. We met the challenge in a wonderful way. Who that was there can ever forget it? It was worth a decade of common life just to breathe the air of those days, and share in the mood of altruism that kept back nothing. Then America's soul was naked to the world. We showed the world what we really are.

Then we put our clothes on again. We rebuilt the barriers we had torn down. We put up once more the old fences that had fallen away, and went back to money-grubbing. We fell into the hands of scheming, unscrupulous politicians, and the League of Nations was junked. How could we stand by and look on and allow the thing to be done? We have gone on from bad to worse since then. We do not care to be told about it. We are unwilling to admit our collapse. It is an unpleasant thing to think about. Shallow brains and lying tongues would have us believe that all is lovely. But they mislead us. What shall be said of what is going on in Chicago, the second city of the nation, where a low type of political campaigning has played on the vilest and basest prejudices in an endeavour to stir up hatred and distrust between America and Great Britain, the

two countries whose friendship is absolutely essential for world peace? It is symptomatic of what may be found to a lesser degree in some other American cities. What shall be said of what took place in a lovely little city when mob misrule ground under its heedless heels the majesty of the law? Some of the most law-abiding people in America dwell in that city, and yet the mob had its way. Therefore, instead of lamenting over Europe, we might do well to sit in sackcloth and ashes a while for America.

We are on our knees to the wrong things. America has three gods.

One is crowds. The crowd dazzles us. It hypnotizes us. It fills us with dismay. It terrorizes us. It makes us afraid. It captures us. We measure moralities by majorities. Whoever can get a crowd is king. The popular preacher is the pulpiteer who by hook or crook can fill his church. We have crowd hysteria. Size is everything. Numbers are angelic. How many? How much?

One must admit that crowds are something of an angel. The crowd is not bad in itself. Man is a social being. He is at his best not in the solitudes, but in human contacts. The best within us comes out in the strife and tumult of life. Heaven is not a desert. It is a crowded city whose inhabitants no man can number.

But a crowd is nothing to make a god of. Crowds never fooled Christ. He saw through

them. Take the day He fed the multitude with miracle bread. They followed Him in droves. They were after the loaves and fishes. He disillusioned them. He asked them if they were ready for the cross, could they eat His flesh and drink His blood, were they ready for hardship and sacrifice, were they willing to lay down their lives? From that day many of them turned back and walked no more with Him. Or take that day He rode down the streets of Jerusalem, with the crowd shouting: Hosanna! It did not turn His head. He knew that in forty-eight hours the same people would be shouting: Crucify Him! In His profoundest moments it was not the crowd He sought, it was loneliness, it was fellowship with the Infinite. Listen to Him at Jacob's well. See Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. Watch Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. See Him on Calvary's cross.

America, quit worshipping the crowd. Get up from your knees. Quit worshipping majorities. Quit thinking that size is everything. America would be greater if she would make less of size and more of soul, less of the seen and more of the unseen. We need to reduce. Worship God!

Gold is another American god. Gold dazzles us, too. We are fond of money, and it is of no use to pretend we are not. And we have accumulated a lot of it. The wealth of the world is in our hands. We are one-fifteenth of the world's popu-

lation and we own half of its wealth. But we are not alone in our admiration of the dollar. People who have far less of it than we are ready to fall on their knees. Europe laughed in its sleeve over the way America took on when Queen Marie visited this country. But one of the humor-cartoonists sagely suggested that Europe takes on the same way when American multi-millionaires carry their moneybags overseas. We all take on over what is scarcest with us.

And gold is something of an angel, too. Consider what gold can do. It can change the world. It can build roads and tame the wilderness. It can build schools and banish ignorance. It can minister to human need and banish poverty and cure misery. It can water the desert and change arid sands into a blooming garden. It can build churches and send forth missionaries and evangelists of good will and apostles of human brotherhood. Gold wields a magic wand. It is angelic. Don't talk about the blessings of poverty. Nobody believes it.

But gold is not what gods are made of. The Son of man had not where to lay His head. The Saviour of the world was poor. There is something more precious than gold. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee," said Simon Peter to the lame man at the temple gate. There is something more precious than money. "Thy money perish with thee!" was the

scornful answer God's servant gave to Simon Magus when he thought to buy heaven's power with gold. Money may be a disaster.

We are living too fast in America. We are wearing out life in the quest for gain. Every day men are breaking down under the tremendous strain. We need to relax as well as reduce. We should be happier were we less eager for gold and more content with simplicity, more absorbed with plain living and high thinking.

The third angel is jazz. We have gone mad in our quest for pleasure. Americans are wild for excitement. They are ready to pay any price for a new thrill. Jazz is an angel that sprouted wings at the close of the World War. It is difficult to analyze, but the crazy mood captures us and we are soon on our knees to the intoxication. Perhaps the jazz mania is responsible for a good deal of the liquor drinking that is going on despite prohibition laws.

Pleasure, of course, is a legitimate part of life. God has built into our natures the need for recreation. Religion was never intended to banish play. It becomes a counterfeit when it seeks to silence song and exile laughter.

But he has sold his soul to a cheap god whose life has tumbled down into nothing but a quest for excitement. He has lost his chance to acquire great hours whose one pursuit is amusement. What big thing has jazz ever done? It never

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painted a great picture. It never wrote a great song. It never generated a divine motive. Jazz is cheap.

The Quakers are right. We need to reflect as well as reduce and relax. Great deeds are born of quiet hours. Divine impulses come when the soul communes with the Infinite. "The shallows murmur, but the deeps are dumb."

AMERICA AND THE SPIRITUAL

It is not crowds, it is not gold, it is not jazz, that America needs. Such things can never make a nation great. Worship God. He alone can satisfy. Man was made for his Maker.

God is a spirit, and man is essentially a spirit. It was a great lesson taught to the despondent Elijah there in the desert. There was a mighty wind, but God was not in the wind; a terrifying earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake; a flaming fire, but God was not in the fire. Then there was a still small voice that could be heard only in a man's inmost soul, and God was in the voice. This is the divine. It is something that lifts above the crowd, that cures the greed for gold, that breaks the spell of the world. It is the spiritual.

This is the dream for our country. It is what America most needs. God give us a spiritual baptism! Mr. Roger Babson, in a recent letter sent out to the children of his distinguished clientele

throughout the nation, says this: "Charles P. Steinmetz, who was unanimously recognized by the General Electric Company and other great similar organizations as the world's foremost electrical engineer, was once visiting my home. While talking over with him prospective future inventions in connection with radio, aeronautics, power transmission, etc., I asked him: 'What line of research will see the greatest development within the next fifty years?' After careful thought, he replied: 'Mr. Babson, I think the greatest discovery will be made along spiritual lines. Here is a force which history clearly teaches has been the greatest power in the development of men and history. Yet we have merely been playing with it, and have never seriously studied it as we have the physical forces. Some day people will learn that material things do not bring happiness, and are of little use in making men and women creative and powerful. Then the scientists of the world will turn their laboratories over to the study of God and prayer and the spiritual forces which as yet have hardly been scratched. When this day comes, the world will see more advancement in one generation than it has seen in the past four.'"

America needs a revival of religion. We shall not get it at the feet of an angel. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the matchless name of Jesus. The realm in which we shall make our

greatest achievements is not material nor scientific nor intellectual nor social, but spiritual. It is the realm of unseen values. There is something greater than crowds, more precious than gold, more thrilling than the delirium of war-mad music. Worship God!

XIII

THE DREAM OF A UNITED CHURCH

"They shall see eye to eye when Jehovah returneth to Zion."—ISAIAH 52: 8.

EVIDENTLY Jehovah was not residing in Zion on the date mentioned. He was somewhere else, and He was missed. His absence made a difference. Because He was not present, His people were in a bad way. They were not seeing eye to eye. They were not seeing white. They were seeing red.

The divisions in that part of the world have been notorious. The divisions have been largely religious, and they are going on to-day. They menace the peace of the world. The Near East is cut up into little nations suspicious of each other, easily angered, swift to resent an offense, and powerless to do little more than croak. One need do no more than stand on a pier and listen to the strife of tongues, to saunter along the streets and watch the wagging heads and waving arms keeping time to a jargon of confusion worse confounded, to get an idea of what Isaiah had in mind when he wrote my text.

The Jews were no exception to the other nations in that part of the world. The prophet seems to say to them: "You are like all the rest. You

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claim to be God's chosen people, but you are at strife among yourselves. You agree on nothing. You are unable to get together. You make religion itself a ground of controversy. Each man thinks his way is the only way. Each little group feels that it has a monopoly of God. Each warring sect proclaims its shibboleth as the only 'Open Sesame' to heaven. When will you cease your jargon and get together?" O, for some messenger to publish peace, to bring good tidings of good things! "They shall see eye to eye when Jehovah returneth to Zion."

Christians are no exception, either, whether they reside in the East or the West. God's people have not yet learned to see eye to eye. The saints have not yet suffered controversy to become a lost art. The jargon of warring creeds and the strife and tumult of sectarian rivalries may still be heard in the land. There are to this day men who affect a monopoly of God, and churches that pretend to carry the keys which unlock the gates of death and hell.

DIVISIONS MANY

Our divisions are many. Protestantism is split into numerous sects, and these sects are split into sub-sects, and these sub-sects are further divided into segments, and these segments peter out into wee frees all contending for some fragment or fraction of an immortal hope out of which alone, they

feel, God's house must be built. One wonders how the Lord feels as He looks down from heaven on these mutilated members of His body, on these hostile creeds and warring denominations, these varied races and colours and clans, and prays again the age-old prayer that they all may be one.

The wonder of the thing is the smallness of the issue which seems to justify these divisions. The saints will divide on anything,—on the mode of baptism, on the subjects of baptism, on the meaning of baptism, on the right to commune, on the posture in prayer, on the place to stand when the message is delivered, on the garment to be worn when the Lord is in His holy temple, on who are the witnesses, who are the elect, on who are saved and who are lost, on who will burn and who will play the harp.

Frederick W. Faber, one of the sweetest saints that ever breathed a prayer or wrote a hymn, once said: "Devout people of all classes are the least kind. It is a scandalous thing to say, but the scandal of the fact is greater than the scandal of the announcement, and I will brave the latter for the sake of the common good. Religious people are an unkindly lot." It is so easy for us to mistake our crotchets for convictions, to feel that we are justifying Jehovah when we are merely defending our own nasty tempers, to imagine that we are contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints when we are merely raising a row in

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a zealous crusade to "damn a' parties but our own."

Even those sections of Christendom which with smug satisfaction point to a measure of unity achieved within their own lines are shouting for a small virtue. Often the thing they call unity is nothing more than uniformity. They succeed in seeing eye to eye by blindfolding the laity, who thus do not see at all, or if they do, see only what they are told to see. If one must choose between seeing what the holy father forbids or not seeing at all, give me my eyes. If I must make a choice between ignorance and heresy, I prefer heresy.

This is the situation after these long centuries that have elapsed since Calvary's cross lifted itself on the skyline. We do not see eye to eye. The Christian Church is divided. We may sing: "We are not divided, all one body we," but the facts are against the song. Are we satisfied with the situation?

DIVISIONS NOTHING TO BE PROUD OF

Our divisions are nothing to be proud of. We may defend them. It is easy to prove that God is on our side, that He is a Presbyterian or a Methodist or a Baptist or an Episcopalian or a Lutheran, as the case may be. Nothing is easier than to quote Scripture to validate our crotchets. We may be strongly attached to our divisions, and feel that God's throne would be endangered should

we take down our denominational fences. It is easy to prove to our own satisfaction that competition is the life of trade in religion as well as in business. But after we have said our piece and sung our sectarian ditty and laid our offering on the altar of denominationalism, the conviction tarries that the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind, and the effort to tether Him to a sect must forever prove futile.

Divisions are costly. That should be enough to condemn them. They are a waste of money and of life. They represent inefficiency. They stand for a system that would not be tolerated in business, and should not be glorified in religion.

Division is a reproach. It makes no one think more of Christ. One may be able to propagate his sect by harnessing his denominational peculiarities, but surely such propagation is nothing to be proud of. Human nature, strange to say, seems readier to rally to a point of difference than to a great spiritual unity, seems swifter to enthuse over denominational idiosyncrasies than over the great fundamental facts which all Christians hold in common. This sort of sectarian propaganda may secure proselytes, but it deserves the sarcasm of Christ when He said: "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourself." A church built on tenacity to sectarianism may rally a membership loyal to certain -isms, but

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is powerless to build into the world the spirit of the gentle Christ.

Divisions are hostile to Christ's dream for His Church. They deny His prayer that they all may be one. Did He mean it? He did not pray for division, He prayed for a united Church. He did not pray for strife and controversy, but for brotherly love. He did not ask for warring creeds and hostile systems, but for devotion to Himself. "Lovest thou me?" It is the only motive in any church that can honour Christ.

God meant us for each other. In calling for disciples, Christ is not seeking for cave-dwellers, for hermit saints, for holy freaks squatting at the top of a denominational pole. One brick by itself is of little value. With it you can scotch a car or hit a hog. But let that brick associate itself with other bricks, let these assemble with themselves some stone and cement and timber, and soon you have a house in which men may dwell. A single note on the piano is not musical. It will drive you distracted if it keeps donging at you. But let it associate itself with the scale, and you have a symphony. Christians need each other. I want to be more than a Presbyterian when I get to heaven. I want to be a part of the whole blood-bought Church of Christ, an heir to the inheritance of all the saints.

Some one once asked a great scientist: "Where is the dividing line between geology and astron-

omy?" He might have imagined the geologist's world ended with the surface of the earth. The scientist answered: "The dividing line between astronomy and geology is where the attraction toward the earth and the attraction toward the sun equal each other." "How far is that?" he was asked. "We cannot be exact," he replied, "because the line varies somewhat, but in round numbers it is about six hundred and twenty thousand miles away." Then for the geologist to keep his feet on the earth and crack rocks and peck metals, he needs six hundred and twenty thousand miles more of world than this planet offers. If this be true for a geologist who walks with his eyes on the ground and whose domain is under his feet, what shall be said of the size of the world demanded by an immortal soul built for communion with God, with longings that reach out into the infinite? Christ meant His Church to be no pent-up Utica, no sectarian Paradise, but a fellowship as spacious as eternity, peopled with a multitude that cannot be numbered.

DIVISIONS CURED

Must all efforts toward closer ranks forever fail? Are we to settle down into the stolid conviction that Christ's dream for a united Church must be dust?

One November afternoon in 1918, Charles H. Pratt, at that time one of the secretaries of the

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Executive Committee of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, a committee of which for many years I have been a member, sat in my church office in Nashville discussing with me the work of our committee. The World War had been won by the strategy of a united command under Foch. We said to each other: "Is not something like this possible for the Church of Christ in its campaign for world conquest?"

Thus was born the Interchurch World Movement. We took our idea to the next meeting of our committee, and I was instructed to invite representatives from all the Missionary Boards in the United States and Canada to attend a meeting in New York City to consider the matter. The idea made an instantaneous appeal. The meeting was held on December 17th, 1918, at 25 Madison Avenue. I addressed the gathering on the subject: "Can the Church Save the World?", and the movement was launched. The remainder is history.

Whatever one's judgment may be as to the methods used, he must admit that while this movement lasted, the kingdom of Christ gave to the world the spectacle of a united Church. Then came the back-wash of nationalism and sectarianism from the World War. We were weary of being unselfish, and society sagged back into the old ruts. The result was that both the League of

Nations and the Interchurch World Movement went on the rocks.

Doubtless mistakes were made, but it was a glorious dream. The dream failed, but some day something like it must be tried again, for Christ's Church must get together.

We should seek to end our divisions and see eye to eye. But the endeavour is not easy to accomplish. Sometimes the task dwindles down into another struggle for sectarian supremacy. Some of the churches that bawl loudest for union are most tenacious of their denominational peculiarities. What they mean by seeing eye to eye is seeing what they want to see. What they mean by union is uniting with them. Some of our efforts are theological. We potter with the creeds. We seek to trim down until we come to something every one can accept. It is usually something no one would have. We mistake uniformity for unity, and seek to heal our divisions by wiping out our differences. But while divisions are the curse of the world, variety is its charm, and to seek to cure division by destroying variety is to fail utterly.

The glory of the forest is not that every tree is like every other tree, but that trees are so varied that no two leaves on any tree are alike. The glory of the firmament is not that all the stars are equally spaced and of the same magnitude, but that the stellar firmament glows with an infinite variety.

“ The old order changeth,
Giving place to new,
And God fulfills Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

Isaiah gives us the cure for division. “ They shall see eye to eye when Jehovah returneth to Zion.” He tells his people that the reason they are arrayed against each other is because they have lost God. Their divisions are not an evidence of piety, but of the lack of it. The reason they are not unified is that they are looking at themselves and not at their leader. Each is absorbed with his own little scheme instead of God’s glory. May not the same thing be true of the Church to-day?

Our controversies are no sign of spirituality. On the contrary. Let us not count it a great day when we differ. It is a great day when we get together. We may rest assured there will be no divisions in heaven, and when they exist on earth, we may safely conclude that they were not handed down from heaven. No church has become apostate when it has turned its back on the things that divide. Let us hail it as a new Pentecost when we forget our divisions and come together. Recently in the city of Shanghai, the representatives of sixteen different denominational bodies united themselves into the Church of Christ in China. Some of the brethren are a little distressed over the consummation. They fear there was too great haste. They have their doubts as to the outcome. But

the occasion calls not for a lamentation but for a hallelujah. It should fill us with joy. It means that the missionaries have not laboured in vain. It means that Christ is "seeing of the travail of his soul" and is satisfied.

Nothing short of a great revival of religion will get us together. We must be lifted to higher levels to discover our oneness in Christ. This was what took place at Pentecost. Have you ever stood on the bank of a tidal river when the tide was out? What a sight met your eyes! The muck and the mire of the swamps, the refuse of the sewers, the creatures that crawl and wiggle in the slimy puddles! It is a scene that offends. Have you ever stood on the beach at low tide? The barriers are in sight. All the irregularities in the landscape are accentuated. But wait until the tide comes in! The ugliness is gone. The barriers have disappeared. All that you behold is the shining sea and the white crests of the conquering waves as they come bounding in on the beach.

It is when the tides of God come in that the Church will be lifted and its divisions disappear. A new Pentecost will hide our shame. It will drown our strife. It will unify our differences and silence our controversies and end our antagonisms. It will lift us. O, for the tides of God! "They shall see eye to eye when Jehovah returneth to Zion!"

XIV

NOONTIDE AT TWILIGHT

"At evening time it shall be light."—ZECHARIAH 14: 7.

THIS is a picture promise of the triumph of peace over fear, of joy over grief, of comfort over sorrow, of patience over worry, of good over evil. It recites the victory of the spiritual over the sensual, the illumination of the natural by the supernatural, the transformation of life's darkness into light, and of the soul's night time into day. "At evening time it shall be light."

The shadows of evening are thickening. Twilight deepens. The mists of the valley are rising. The sun has dropped from sight behind the western hills, and night spreads its sable mantle on the world. But suddenly the outlook shifts from gloom to glory. A strange contradiction of the ordinary course of nature transpires. For once there is no night. The glory of the day declines to die from the world. The approaching darkness is baffled and driven back from the fields of space where it was accustomed to pitch its tent. A marvellous and mysterious radiance floods the sky and transfigures the earth. It is noontide at twilight.

Such is the picture the prophet paints into the

promise. Zechariah was a poet as well as a prophet. With the soul of a poet and the brush of an artist, he tells the story of God's wonderful dealings with His children in the dark hours of life. He says God does not leave them in the shadows. He does not forsake them at nightfall. He does not desert them when sorrow and woe and affliction would wrap them in its gloom. When natural lights fade out, when the day declines, and all earthly sources of joy and comfort are spent, the Son of righteousness arises with healing in His wings, and "at evening time it is light."

One wonders if the prophet did not get the picture from the world about him. Zechariah was a mountaineer. Perhaps he had seen a suggestion of the promise in the golden glow of some prolonged and lengthened-out sunset. No place is more beautiful than the mountains in the daytime, with their vast vistas of scenic glory, their deep and silent vales of romantic mystery, their wide, unbroken stretches of virgin forest, their dizzy peaks, their mighty winds unstained by the dust and dirt of grinding trade and travel, and over all the sweet quiet and peace of God's world. That for the day.

But when night falls there is a change. There is no flash of electric lights anywhere to make a white way. A feeling of loneliness steals over us. The cry of wild things is heard breaking in on the night air. The vistas of glory have disappeared. The mysterious forests are peopled with strange

fears and threatening terrors. Then one seeks cheer and companionship around the lights which burn under the roof tree of home. Nowhere is the day fairer, nor the night more awesome, than in the land of the sky with the great peaks piled up around you into a mountain world. Zechariah, who was a mountain dweller, could feel all this, and its spell was upon him as he writes his poem.

Let us fancy that one evening as he stopped on some outstanding peak to watch the day wear to its close, to drink in the charm of some wondrous sunset, spellbound by the beauty of some great pageant of the sky, he suddenly awoke to the fact that the day was not departing. The night was due, but the darkness did not come. The sun has disappeared, but the whole horizon glows with a golden radiance. By a marvellous play of reflection and refraction in the clouds, one of those rare and strange phenomena sometimes seen in the mountains is transpiring. An unearthly glow spreads over the sky, and the beauty of noontide suffuses the twilight. Something like this Zechariah saw. It filled him with ecstasy. He carried the picture in his soul, and when the time came to write of God's care of His people, he thought of that hour on Sunset Peak, and wrote of noontide at twilight.

At evening time, at the time when natural lights are fading, when natural joys are dying, when natural strength has spent itself, when all the

world's powers with which we conquer darkness are worn out, at evening when the glory of the world is dead, when the gloom of the night is at hand, when the terrors of the strange darkness threaten, when all is mystery and uncertainty and loneliness, at evening time it shall be light! The day comes back. The glory of high noon spreads itself once more over the world. We are ravished with its beauty.

Thus God comes to His children in their times of need, in their seasons of tumult and distress. When the soul is on the verge of some great shadow, on the brink of some terrifying gloom, in the edge of some approaching sorrow or disaster, let us not be cast down nor discouraged. Let not the heart give way to loneliness and fear, for at evening time it shall be light.

A NATION'S NIGHT

It was the prophet's message to his nation in a time of darkness. It is a gloomy recital that is given in the first part of the chapter. The nation had become the prey of spoilers. Everybody seemed against Jerusalem. The city was to be taken, the houses rifled, the women ravished, half of the city led forth into captivity and the residue cut off. It was a picture of the night. It was not a fancy sketch. It all came true. The prospect was enough to paralyze effort. No wonder the people were utterly cast down.

Then the prophet comes and sits amid the ruins. He looks into bewildered faces. He sees heaps of desolate homes. He hears the cries of children for dead mothers. Amid it all, he sings of hope. He says to them: "Do not despair. God has not deserted you. Let the twilight fall. Let the night descend. God will suddenly sweep back the darkness and give day for night. He will be with you. He will strengthen and sustain you. He will deliver you from the spoiler, and all the glory that was lost shall come back."

This is God's promise to every nation that puts its trust in Him. Often it has been tried and tested, never has it failed. Again and again like ancient Israel people have been called to suffer persecution and martyrdom. Property, home, life itself has been taken. It is the story of the Covenanters of Scotland, of the Huguenots of France, of the Reformers in Holland and Germany. It is the story of the Armenians in our own day, and of God's little flock in mission lands where the light has just begun to shine. At night time the noontide has come back. Still it is true that

"For us fights the proper man
Whom God Himself hath bidden."

THE NIGHT OF TROUBLE

It is preëminently a promise for the Christian in the night of trouble. Who is there but at times

feels the night approaching? It is a world of trouble. The lights fade out. The sun of hope sets. The stars disappear from the sky. The soul is left lonely, frightened, homesick, knowing not which way to turn. We grope on, stumbling, perplexed, afraid.

Sometimes it is the night of sorrow. Death has ended our brief day of happiness. Sometimes it is worse. We wish it had been death. Sometimes it is adversity, ill health, poverty; the night is a common experience. Where is the face unmarked by shadows?

But at evening time it shall be light. Repeatedly we find it so. The night itself becomes a time of illumination, of spiritual uplift. Sorrow becomes sacramental, losses turn to gains, disasters to blessings in disguise, and out of a rapturous experience we sing:

“Light after darkness, gain after loss,
Strength after weakness, crown after cross,
Sweet after bitter, hope after fears,
Home after wandering, praise after tears.”

But the text means more than this. It is something more than the assurance that our light afflictions are but for a moment and shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. That is true. But there is more. There is a light that never was on land or sea. It is the light of God's blessed peace, the comfort of divine

fellowship, the sense of divine Presence, the felt nearness of Him Who is the light of the world. This comes, and when it does, there is no night. There was never such a day. We are walking not under the clouds, but on them, with the cloudless sun overhead.

Then all God's promises become real. They were built for the dark hours. They flash out in living light. "Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee." Life is as bright as the promises of God. It is worth while to stand a bit in the edge of the shadow to come directly into the glory of such light. Let the night come, for Christ comes, too. He is the light of every man, and in Him is no darkness at all.

THE NIGHT OF DEATH

It is a promise we are in the habit of applying to what we call the night of death. Night is our favourite picture of death. All the fear of a night in the wilds is there. The shadows deepen. The lamps flicker in their sockets. The torch burns out. The gloom settles down about us. We are lonely. We are afraid. But at evening time it shall be light.

Sometimes there is a strangely literal fulfillment of the promise. The dying saint speaks of a light

as the colour leaves the face and the pulses go to sleep and the natural eye grows lustreless. "I see a light," she said. "It is so bright and beautiful." Thus it was with Stephen as he fell asleep. The heavens were open. A world of wondrous, ineffable light broke upon him, and he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. But the promise is more than the pledge of a death-bed rapture.

It is a word with which to paint the triumph of Christian hope. Death is not disaster. It is a chapter of life. We die in order to live. Nothing is so bright as Christian hope at the gates of death. All is peace and confidence and triumphant expectation. It is like loosing a boat from a strange shore that it may sail across the waters to the homeland, not into the night, but into the light, into the splendour and beauty of the everlasting morning. Then let the twilight come when it may, for it is a harbinger of dawn.

"I know not what the long years hold
Of winter days and summer clime,
But this I know—when life grows old
It shall be light at evening time.

I cannot tell what boon awaits
To greet me with the falling night,
But this I know,—beyond the gates
At evening time it shall be light."*

* Thomas Curtis Clark.

XV

THE LEGACY OF A PERFECT LOVE

"Behold, how he loved him."—JOHN 11: 36.

THIS was the tribute paid to the memory of the man whose pulseless body¹ was sleeping yonder at the end of the garden path, and whose sorrowing sisters are slowly taking Jesus to the place where they had laid him.

Jesus has spoken to them of immortality. He has said: "Your brother shall rise again." He has said to Mary and Martha what those ministering in His name have been saying to lonely hearts through all the years: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." But this was not enough to ease the ache in their hearts, nor to heal the hurt of their sorrow. They can only reply: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, our brother had not died."

Then Christ's heart went to His face. There were tears in His eyes, too. The profoundest proof that He was human as well as divine came to pass. As those who stood by looked on, they said: "Behold, how he loved him!" To be sure, they straightway challenged His love. They said: "He

is merely acting. It is easy to cry. If He really loves him, why did He let him die? ” But they do not understand. Wait until Christ raises the dead. Wait until love rends the tomb. Then doubt will die.

But Mary and Martha know Christ is not weeping for effect. When they see His tears and begin to understand how He loved their brother, their own tears dry. Their burdens lift. All doubts are gone. Hope is singing in their souls. They see there is no death. Great is love! Greatest is love! “ And now abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love.” “ Behold, how he loved him! ”

What I am writing in this chapter was suggested and requested by one for whom I have great respect. He has seen much of life in all its aspects, and his influence has been far-reaching, especially among the young. He is qualified by judgment, character, and experience to rate real values. He made his request in the hope that what I am writing might influence the young, who sometimes learn too late what makes life worth while.

A MOTHER'S WILL

A recent issue of a Southern daily carried the story of a legacy. The legacy was left to a well-known Southern capitalist, whose name is mentioned in the story, but withheld here. Suffice it to say he is a man of large wealth, and actively

identified with a number of big business enterprises. To this man, who seemed already to have so much that he could neither need nor use more, there was left a legacy.

It was left him by his mother. It was specifically named in her will, and was of such a character that the government was unable to collect on this legacy an inheritance tax. And yet such was its value that the values on which the government could collect a tax were worth little without it. I imagine the man who received the legacy values what his mother left him more than all his other possessions.

This is the paragraph in the will: "I wish my son," (naming him), "to know that he has never given me cause for unhappiness or worry during his life; and it is my desire that he remember me as giving to him a perfect love."

The editor, in commenting on this legacy, goes on to say: "Money, when the real fundamental things of life are concerned, is not a commodity of very great value, after all. It will buy food, clothing, houses, automobiles, and such like, and they are very fine. Yet a man cannot live by them alone. The thing that sets a man above the beast, makes life worth living, and convinces him of his immortality, has nothing to do with money. It has to do rather with the giving of service and devotion, and the receiving of love in return.

"And as man grows older, there is the matter

of memory. All that he has done is the material out of which his memory weaves a background. If this background has a texture that will bear close inspection, the man need not worry about his declining days. They will be happy. If it happens to be otherwise, his money will not be able to do much to pad his last years."

Blessed the mother who could leave such a legacy, thrice happy the son to deserve and inherit such an estate. Would that every mother could leave it to her children! Would that every child could deserve as much from his mother! In these days when fathers are piling up big fortunes to leave to their children, when mothers are keen to make a match that means money, when dollars are considered the only thing worth mentioning in a will, when success and happiness, fame and fortune, are regarded as impossible without wealth, it may be worth while for us to stop and think of the legacy of a perfect love.

Death cannot rob this Southern millionaire of what was left him in his mother's will. It can part him from his mines and corporations and real estate. In a breath it can sever him from all his possessions that are taxed, and for which he has toiled and struggled and sweated. But this thing that has come to him as a free gift, which cannot be taxed nor diverted nor destroyed, this legacy of a perfect love, will become increasingly his as the shadows of death fall about him.

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“ Behold, how he loved him! ” No wonder the tomb could not hold Lazarus. Love defies death. It robs death of its sting, and empties the grave of its victory.

LIFE'S MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE

Love is life's most precious treasure. It is something time cannot tarnish, nor death destroy. To be sure, there are those who regard it as merely idealistic, as dreamy and unsubstantial; but life is lonely without it. It is great to have a friend. It is wonderful to have some one who loves you. It is divine to have a love on which you can bank when other treasures turn to dust.

There is no substitute for love. Money cannot take its place, nor travel, nor fame, nor all the honours and pleasures of the world. The evidence of this appears again and again. The heart was made for love, and to try to satisfy its longings with things is like feeding on husks that swine eat.

Nevertheless, we often treat love as a common thing. Having wronged it, having slain it, having lost it, we learn too late its value. In a recent trip, the man who sat across the aisle in the car endeavoured two or three times to engage me in conversation. Finally I asked him to come over and share my seat with me, and he did. I soon discovered that he was longing to unburden himself. Seeing from my clothes that I was a minister, he felt that he could talk with me somewhat freely on

the intimate things of life. He told me his story. He was unhappy. He had been divorced from the woman he had married and who was the mother of his two children. He had not fought the divorce, but for the sake of the children rather than for himself he had tried to prevent it. Six months after the divorce his wife had married a man of great wealth in a Southern city, but two months after the marriage she was in the divorce court again seeking freedom. He had just received a letter from her in which she said that as soon as she secured this second divorce she thought, especially for the sake of the children, they should remarry. "What is your answer?" I said, and he replied: "Once I should have hailed it, but now it is too late. The love I once had for her is dead."

I adjure you that you be true to love, that you decline to barter it for a mess of pottage, much less for an evil indulgence, that you decline to soil its garments or shame its soul.

"The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one,
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one,
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done."

THE LEGACY

It is a great thing to bequeath the legacy of a perfect love. It is a love that has never doubted, that has never counted the cost, that has never hesitated at sacrifice, nor turned away from suffering. It is a love that cheerfully bears burdens and carries crosses, that bares itself to the storm to protect those it loves, that does not complain, that is patient, that longs for some answering look, some pressure of the hand, a kiss, an embrace, a token to say that love is recognized, but that demands no price, that loves on through all storms and nights, through all dreariness and forgetfulness, through all worlds.

We are not surprised that it is a mother's love in the story. It is a will many a mother could make. She could not leave you money, lands, jewels, for she has never had these herself. All she can bequeath is love. But it is a love on which you can count. Other loves might fail you, but hers never. Others might doubt you, but not your mother. When every other door is shut in your face, there is one place you know you can go, one true heart that will stake its last beat on you.

Yet it is not always a mother's love. Sometimes it is a father's. Sometimes it is filial love. Sometimes it is the love that makes of man and woman husband and wife, and which we swear before the marriage altar shall never know doubt nor

change. Sometimes it is the love of friendship, like that between David and Jonathan. But whatever its kind, I warn you not to despise it, not to betray it, not to sell it for worldly success. The day will come when you will discover its true worth, and long for it and prize it above all the chattels of time.

Thank God for memory! I fancy when the will was read memory opened the doors, and he went into a room where the things his mother had done for him came back. He could see her face. He could hear her voice. He could recall a smile, a tear, a kiss, a prayer, a letter that had made a long day shorter and a hard duty easier. What a garment memory weaves! What a texture to the dream whose threads are not woven gold but strands of perfect love!

DESERVING THE LEGACY

It is great not only to leave, but to deserve the legacy of a perfect love. In her will the mother said: "You have never given me cause for unhappiness or worry during your life." It was perfect love speaking. Doubtless this rich man was like all other sons. He would never claim such a record for himself. He wishes he could. But probably his life was the common average, oftentimes self-willed, impatient, forgetful. And yet beneath it all there was something deeper than life itself which his mother could see perhaps as

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no one else, and which made her tribute nearer the truth than her son would ever dare to claim.

Whether one reaches it or not, it is something to want to live so as to deserve the bequest. It is something to have it for an ideal, and strive never to give ground for worry or unhappiness to those who love us with a perfect love. Here is something to consider when life's choices are made. What effect will it have on those who love us? Will it hurt them? Will some one go into the room and shut the door and wonder why we forget? Will some face be drawn with agony and some heart break? This is what my friend had in mind when he gave me this subject. He hoped it might stir the heart of some boy or girl to resolve to live so as to deserve the legacy of a perfect love. I pray that it may.

I have been writing of earthly love. There is a perfect love that is heavenly. Let us think of that, too. Jeremiah represents God as saying: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Let us be careful how we sin against the love of Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us. An earthly love is beautiful, but it has its limitations. A few years ago in a certain city, an old couple moved into a little apartment on a quiet street. Their one idea seemed to be to stay close together. They were gentle and unobtrusive, and their sunlit apartment was neatly kept. They did not complain. They

always went out together, and once in a while they could be seen going to the bank. One day the gas leaked from under their door out into the hallway and down the stairs. Their bodies were found inside in the last sleep. They had come to the end of the road grateful that there was gas enough to spare, and that death would pay as little heed to them as life had done. The old man in his last moments lay near the door as though he had struggled to reach it, and just behind him, his wife with her arms stretched out toward him. On the table was found a little book, the one they were wont to carry to the bank, and across its last page the bank official had written: "Account closed." Theirs was a perfect love. They could not live apart, and so they died by their own hand rather than separate.

But there is a love that rends the tomb as it did that grave at the end of the path in Mary's garden. There is a love that keeps us together even when death's shadow falls between. It is the legacy of such a perfect love that Jesus left to all who put their trust in Him. As we think of it, we may say, not with the doubting wonder of the mourners around the tomb at the end of the garden path, but with the adoring wonder of the saints around the throne: "Behold, how he loved him! "

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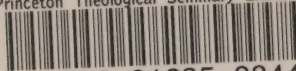
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but to love God is greatest.

